

# 愁堂れな

イラスト ◆ 葛西リカコ

## 孤独な犬たち

REPA  
SHUHDON  
PRESENTS

キャラ文庫



# **Kodoku na Inutachi**

## **(Lonely Dogs)**

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**- THIS IS A NON-PROFIT TRANSLATION -**

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Kanou & Syoichi

◆  
「孤独な犬たち」



「うわあーっ」  
号泣する香介の背に加納がおすおすと腕を回してくる。  
「兄さん、兄さん、兄さん……っ」  
加納の胸に顔を埋め、泣きじゃくる香介の脳裏に  
兄の優しい笑顔が浮かんた。  
(本文 P187より)

“Ughh,” Kyosuke sobbed, and Kanou cautiously put his arms around him.  
“Big brother, big brother, big brother...!”  
His face buried in Kanou’s chest, Kyosuke sobbed as his big brother’s kind smile flashed into his mind. (From pp.187 in the text)

# 「Prologue」

Love.

Until now, the only people I had ever loved in my life were my family. I had never imagined that there would ever be a day where I'd love a complete stranger so much that I would be willing to sacrifice myself.

In the beginning, I had thought that if this love were to continue I wouldn't be able to protect the people dearest to me. But though I knew this, I couldn't suppress my urge to want to pursue this love. Until I met him, I hadn't known that love could be this strong.

I wasn't asking for anything in return. I knew that receiving his kindness was not something I could ask for. I didn't know if he loved me but I couldn't stop myself from pathetically wanting to do anything for him.

That kind of love was probably futile, but even then, I still loved him. I remember that when I was in high school, they called this kind of thing an unconditional love, but I had not expected that I myself would hold this kind of love towards a stranger.

And yet.....

And yet, I was happy being in love.

Even if it was futile. Even if it was selfish of me to say this, to me that love was my will to live.

Love.....

I never belonged to a particular religion, but I was grateful to God for giving me someone to love. If even after I die my love for him would continue, I think I will be happy.

# 「Chapter 1」

People grit their teeth to overcome pain. But when the pain gets to be too much, the back molar teeth begin to chatter and even gritting becomes impossible. Miyama Kyosuke discovered this personally. His pain was continuous, and it was intense. Up until now, his life was not one you could call ‘peaceful’. Both of Kyosuke’s parents had died of illness when he was in his second year in junior high school. And then, his only biological older brother had also passed away.

He was alone in this world now; literally alone as could be. What had happened to him was a great misfortune. At the same time his older brother had passed away, Kyosuke had become injured himself. He was caught in the explosion which had taken his older brother’s life, and because of that, Kyosuke had suffered bone fractures in several places and received terrible burns. Half a year had passed until he could hold things, and a full year until he could stand and walk.

He felt intense pain with each step he took, but in order to move forward, he gritted his teeth and endured the suffering. Every day, his only wish was to get his body back faster.

So that he could move faster.

So that he could gain power to grasp with his hands.

Because of that, Kyosuke endured this painful rehabilitation center and gritted his back molar teeth so much that they shook. He did all of this in order to get revenge on the man who had killed his older brother. There were still biting-lip-until-it-bleeds experiences to be felt in the future, but Kyosuke experienced plenty enough in this one year. At that time, only one man’s face flashed into this mind – the face of a tall, impossibly good-looking, wicked man in a dark suit.

\* \* \* \*

“How do you feel, Kyosuke-kun?”

Sweating at the rehabilitation center as usual, Kyosuke heard a voice behind him and wiped his face before turning around.

“Sahashi-san, sorry for always troubling you.”

Even before turning around, Kyosuke knew to whom the voice belonged to. And it wasn’t simply because he recognized the voice of the police detective who visited him

at the hospital – the top detective, Sahashi Yukio, was the only person who ever came to see him.

“It’s nothing to apologize for.”

Sahashi was in his mid-thirties but clearly handsome. He was over 180 centimeters tall and dressed in a suit perfectly fit for his body. His rimless spectacles made him appear intellectual and elite. But his smile was friendly, and when he smiled it made people feel at ease.

“Your treatment seems to be going well. I heard from the doctor just now that you can fully walk now. But I also heard that you push yourself too much,” Sahashi said with a smile, but Kyosuke could tell how worried he was about him.

“I’m not pushing myself.”

Kyosuke was aware that his answer had come out cold, but it was because he was impatient. He could not afford to take his time. Right now, at this very moment, the man he hated, the one who had committed the great, unredeemable sin, was easily existing somewhere in this world. But the police detective Sahashi didn’t know about Kyosuke’s hatred towards that man. It seemed that Sahashi wasn’t aware that Kyosuke had such thoughts about trying to amend things.

A friendly smile appeared on his face as he looked up at Sahashi.

“.....I’m sorry. I guess I just overestimated how much my body can handle.....”

If he said the first thing that came to his mind, it would obviously sound like a lie, so he said more than fifty percent of the truth. In this one year, Kyosuke had become a master of this method of telling half-truths. Before this, Kyosuke had lost the will to live and had spent his days indifferently. But when he suddenly regained the determination to do things, it surprised the doctor and Sahashi. It was then decided that it would be best for him to go to the rehabilitation center. Afraid that it would damage Kyosuke’s newfound determination to do things, both the doctor and Sahashi had not asked him the reason for his sudden change at first, but because Kyosuke’s determination had not died out even when he couldn’t stand by himself and needed to hold on to something in order to just take a few steps, Sahashi had finally asked, “What is driving you?”

“.....”

Kyosuke had been about to brush this topic aside, but instead found that he couldn’t say anything fitting.

“Never mind,” Sahashi had smiled and stroked Kyosuke’s head. “I think that what you’re doing now would make your older brother happy.”

When Sahashi had said this, Kyosuke thought that perhaps he would make that his reason for his determination, but when he was about to say this, he had felt that his words would seem like a lie, since he wouldn't be able to make them sound convincing enough, and he didn't want to use his older brother in a lie.

If his older brother were alive, he would urge him to try to do his best in the rehabilitation center and would have rejoiced when Kyosuke had gotten the determination to do things, but his older brother was now dead. Perhaps in his older brother's heart, feelings like anger, sadness, and regret had remained when he had been killed. Now, in his own heart, after having his older brother murdered, he felt the same. That anger and regret was the real 'reason' fueling his willpower, but Kyosuke acknowledged that only Sahashi knew about this reason.

"I understand how you feel, but you can't push yourself so much. This institution is different from a police hospital. No doctor or administrate is urging you to leave. You chose to come here to recover, didn't you?" Let's take a little break, Sahashi insisted, and thinking it was a little annoying, Kyosuke accepted his hand and sat down on the sofa, which stood along the wall of the rehabilitation room.

Right away, Sahashi went to go buy himself and Kyosuke a can of coffee, and when he returned he said 'Here' as he handed him the can. Honestly, Kyosuke didn't really like coffee with sugar and milk in it, but he had never told Sahashi this from the start, so Sahashi always bought himself black coffee but didn't buy that for Kyosuke. To a person of age, such as Sahashi, a high school student was a 'child', and he was under the impression that children liked sweet things with sugar and milk, rather than black coffee. Sahashi was a 'good-person' and overly compassionate at times, but he had a self-righteous side to him as well, although that part of him seemed to be a necessary thing to have for his career. Kyosuke accepted the coffee, since it would be rude not to drink it. As usual, he accepted it with thanks.

"Thank you," he said and pulled the tab on the can.

"I was touched when I saw that you could do that by yourself," Sahashi said quietly and turned to look kindly at Kyosuke. "I'm surprised you're recovering so fast. Just one month ago, I had opened it for you."

".....Sahashi-san, you really take care of me..." I'm sorry, Kyosuke said and bowed his head. Seventy percent of him sincerely felt this way.

"Don't be." I didn't mean it like that, Sahashi replied hastily, and Kyosuke bowed his head deeper.

“Not only did you find me another hospital to transfer to, you also frequently come to see me like this even though you’re busy...I’m truly grateful for this.”

“I’m not that busy.....How do I put this...it’s more like you should be *angry* with me about whether the Japanese police are doing their duty or not,” Sahashi said, looking startled like he had just realized this, and then the next moment, with a sincere look on his face, bowed to Kyosuke. “I’m really sorry for what happened to you and for still not being able to arrest the murderer who took your brother’s life. Because of this, I think that you should resent us for not doing our duty.”

“No...” I wouldn’t do that, Kyosuke was about to say, but couldn’t. He lowered his head and beside him, Sahashi continued, with a sincere look on his face as always.

“Two years has flown by since then, but we still don’t have a single clue...I can apologize as much as I want, but I don’t think it would do you any good. I truly am sorry for this. The criminal investigation is still definitely going under way, so I just ask that you wait a little bit longer.”

“.....Okay.....”

As Kyosuke hung his head, his older brother’s hideously burnt corpse flashed into his mind. The April of the year before last, when it was time to welcome the blooming sakura trees, the explosion had occurred, taking away his older brother’s life.

Kyosuke had attended a metropolitan high school in Tokyo. He used to be an ordinary high school student. When he had been in his second year in junior high school, both his parents died from illness leaving his older brother, Syoichi, and him to live alone together. Kyosuke had always been an introvert and never had too many friends. Having received the shock from losing both his parents, he had become even more withdrawn, but his older brother of five years his senior had gently watched over him, never meddling into Kyosuke’s personal life, and had always been there to stretch out a helpful hand to him.

Ever since he was a child, Kyosuke had been mistaken for a girl due to his cute appearance, and his older brother Syoichi had also been good-looking enough to attract glances. Syoichi had been so beautiful, with his black hair and misty eyes, that even Kyosuke, being his younger brother, had also stopped to admire him for a moment sometimes. In terms of personality, Syoichi had been similar to Kyosuke. Although he had been beautiful, he had given off a strong impression that he didn’t like associating with people, since he always had his eyes cast down. After losing their parents, Syoichi had managed to scrape up enough money to pay for their living expenses and Kyosuke’s

school expenses, and had always paid for his own schooling by working. When he had graduated from the university, he was able to receive a decent income by working at an enterprise company that was developed by his senpai<sup>1</sup> from the university. However, that job had been hard. He had worked even on weekends, came home late on days end, and there were even times he came home after dawn. After the death of their parents, the brothers had moved from their single-family house, where the four of them had lived as a family, into a small apartment. The reason for this had been due to financial issues. Their parents had left them a small inheritance, but in order to pay for life insurance, the brothers had no choice but to sell their house.

After Syoichi had begun to receive a high salary, the two brothers began to consider moving again. Syoichi had suggested to Kyosuke that they move into a better secured apartment complex, but because Kyosuke had been preparing for his high school graduation exams, he had refused, saying it was fine where they were now. Although it had been true that he was preparing for his exams, the actual truth was that Kyosuke was secretly sulking at his older brother, because they hardly spent any time together since his older brother was always so busy. But thanks to his older brother's high salary, they could pay for financial expenses, and also thanks to this, Kyosuke's dream of attending a university was going to come true.

Kyosuke had dreamed of becoming a doctor someday, but tuition was expensive for the Department of Medicine, so he had given up on attending a university. However, his older brother, who had known about Kyosuke's aspirations, had cheered him up by telling him, "It'll be alright", because he was certainly going to support him until Kyosuke became a doctor. After seeing his older brother's proud smile, Kyosuke had devoted himself to his studies everyday in order to be accepted by the Department of Medicine right after graduating high school. He was going to do it for his older brother, but right around that time, the apartment, the two had lived in, had been blown up.

The night of the incident, his older brother had come home at two in the morning as usual.

"Were you drinking?"

As their two futons lay side-by-side in the middle of the eight tatami mat room, Kyosuke had smelled alcohol when he peeked out of his futon. He had heard his older brother call out to him, having just come home.

"Did I wake you? Sorry."

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<sup>1</sup> Senpai: An upperclassman.

To Kyosuke, it had seemed that his older brother sounded drunk. Because his job was hard, his older brother frequently went out drinking with his clients and often returned home smelling like alcohol.

“Should I get you some water?” Kyosuke had asked, getting up from his futon, and his older brother wearily replied, “.....Thanks.”

It seemed that his older brother was not a good drinker, but often came home heavily drunk. Kyosuke had always thought it was pitiful that his older brother was being made to drink. That had probably been the case as well that night. Feeling sorry for his older brother, Kyosuke had headed towards the kitchen. The moment Kyosuke had opened the refrigerator door, he had heard a crashing sound of the window breaking. Immediately, he dashed back into the room where the sound had come from, wondering what had happened and had been blinded by a burning flash of light. Half the room had been detonated by a hand grenade, which had been thrown in through the window.

Syoichi had been directly hit, so he had died instantly and Kyosuke was thrown back by the blast. He had been burnt by the flames and had suffered from burns all over his body. Because this had happened deep in the night, at two in the morning, there had been no witnesses present, and because the whole apartment had been completely destroyed by the fire, there was no means of gathering evidence either.

Perhaps the person who had thrown the bomb into Syoichi and Kyosuke's apartment had been going after the two or maybe it was a random killing, now after two years, there were still no clues that lead to the murderer. Sahashi originally had not been part of the criminal investigation. It was about one year ago that he was placed in charge of the incident. Although he frequently visited Kyosuke and told him about how the investigation was progressing, it could hardly be called 'progress'. He sincerely apologized to Kyosuke about this every time he saw him.

Today as well, Sahashi deeply apologized for how useless the police were, but to Kyosuke, this frequent apology seemed like Sahashi was just acting. Kyosuke didn't think Sahashi was being thoughtless, though, and even Kyosuke himself was acting. So he told Sahashi what he always told him.

“It's not your fault, Sahashi-san. Besides, you're very kind to me. I'm sorry that you always have to apologize.”

“Of course I have to apologize. I'm the one in charge of the investigation, after all. It's my responsibility that the investigation continues,” Sahashi said looking his most serious and tried to bow his head again. Kyosuke opened his mouth to stop him as he

wondered if they were going to have the usual recited conversation again today.

“Sahashi-san, you brought me to this hospital. Because of that, I can now walk. I can’t thank you enough for this.”

“That’s nothing to be thanking me so much for,” Sahashi gave him his usual smile and then reached to stroke Kyosuke’s head.

“I’m glad we found this nice hospital. Besides, you’re in charge of the hospital admittance fees, so you shouldn’t be thanking me.”

“.....Thank you.”

This orderly hospital had quite a high admittance fee. The reason Kyosuke was able to pay for this was because his deceased older brother had applied for life insurance. Kyosuke had no idea about this, so he was amazed when he had heard from Sahashi that he was granted one million yen<sup>2</sup> worth of insurance money. Not only did Kyosuke not have a single relative, he had been confined to bed rest at that time, so Sahashi had become his guardian and had undertaken all of the negotiations with the insurance company in Kyosuke’s place. Kyosuke certainly was a victim of the incident, but the police did not give such thoughtful aftercare to every one of the victims. Even though Kyosuke truly felt thankful to Sahashi, since he guessed that Sahashi did everything simply because he was a caring person, he felt some doubt and wondered if perhaps Sahashi was going a little too far.

Perhaps there was another reason for his kindness? Perhaps he was planning on pocketing some of his insurance money for himself. But when Kyosuke had overheard the doctor and the nurse talking about Sahashi’s background, he thought that maybe that wasn’t it. Sahashi’s job was to oversee the eastern side of the country. It seemed that he represented the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department. Although he himself was indeed remarkably skilled at his job, his father held a seat in the parliament and his uncle was a manager of an enterprise. In fact, it seemed his whole family was rich. But even at thirty-four years old, Sahashi was still unmarried, and despite how many women were vying to be his wife, he had no intention of marrying, so he refused any marriage proposal. Even though Kyosuke should not have heard this information, he couldn’t help but overhear it from a gossiping nurse. One time, the pushy nurse had even directly asked Kyosuke with a request, ‘I want you to introduce me to Sahashi.’

This man, marvelous in both looks and personality, had a promising future and a budding career, so Kyosuke could not think of a single reason as to why this man was so

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<sup>2</sup> One million yen is about \$10,000

concerned over him. However, Kyosuke had no reason to refuse, so he decided he might as well accept it and think of this as simply the man's benevolence.

“Anyway, don't be hasty. Let's take it slow, okay?”

Although Sahashi, busy as he was, frequently visited him, he never stayed long. Today, as well, he told him a 'see you later', and left with a smile. A strong urge to shout after him and stop him from leaving welled up in Kyosuke's chest.

*“The murderer in that incident is Kanou, the wakagashira<sup>3</sup> of the Okawa. Please arrest him immediately and sentence him!”*

The police still had not gotten to the bottom of the truth about that incident. Kyosuke had tried to tell Sahashi the name of the murderer, who had blown up the apartment he had lived in and murdered his older brother, but thought against it every time.

The reason for this was simple. He knew that even if the police knew the man's name, they wouldn't be able to arrest him. The person who made him believe this was Kanou, who had told Kyosuke himself that he was the murderer.

Two years ago, Kanou had appeared before Kyosuke while he had still been at the police hospital. Perhaps he had been taking a risk, but Kanou had shown up in Kyosuke's room at the police hospital. At that time, Kyosuke had been in a daze; still in shock and refusing to accept that he had lost his beloved brother and was now all-alone in the world. Although Kyosuke could not get out of bed himself, he was relatively conscious. When the detective had told him that his older brother was dead, Kyosuke hadn't believed him and had demanded to see the body. However, the detective had pushed Kyosuke's wish aside, telling him, with much difficulty, that because the damage to the body had been severe, it would be best not to see him. It seemed that he had been concerned about Kyosuke's condition, since Kyosuke had suffered serious injuries. Nevertheless, Kyosuke had pleaded and pleaded, so the detective had brought him a wheelchair and had taken him to have a conference with his silent older brother. This 'older brother', however, was no longer the one Kyosuke had known.

His older brother's corpse had been burnt to the crisp and he didn't look like his older brother anymore. In fact, he didn't even look 'human'. Upon seeing this, Kyosuke was so shocked that he had lost consciousness right on the spot. In the end, several days later Kyosuke had found out through the dental identity verification that the thing he had seen was in fact his older brother. After autopsy had been performed on the corpse, it was

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<sup>3</sup> Wakagashira: Title of the second in command of a Yakuza family

cremated, and the ashes were delivered to Kyosuke's room in the hospital. The apartment the two brothers had lived in was completely destroyed by the fire and he didn't have a single relative he could turn to. His older brother's death had come as such a blow for Kyosuke that he wasn't able to speak for quite some time.

As the investigation regarding his older brother's death continued, new evidence had emerged, confusing Kyosuke so much that he shut himself up in his own shell even more. In order to determine if someone specifically targeting his older brother had really caused the explosion, the police had to look into Syoichi's personal background, but what they had discovered about his older brother and the kind of things he had done, were not what Kyosuke had expected.

To Kyosuke's understanding, Syoichi worked while attending the university, and when he had graduated from the university, he had worked at a company of his senpai. At least that was what he had thought, but what he actually learned was that as soon as their parents passed away, his older brother had dropped out of university in the middle of the term and worked at various part-time jobs just to scrape by. When he turned twenty, he had begun working in the night scene, but one year later, he vanished from the bar he had been working at as a bartender, and no matter how much the police had investigated, they could not locate his place of employment after that.

"So...does that mean it was a lie that he was working for the new company his senpai from university had established?" I can't believe this, Kyosuke had said, looking dazed, when the detective in charge of the incident at that time told him all of this hesitatingly.

In addition, Kyosuke had also learnt from the police that that senpai never existed. The police questioned Kyosuke if he had any clues about his older brother's latter job. When he was being questioned, Kyosuke had revealed to the detectives that his older brother had come home late often and had even worked on weekends, but it seemed that the detectives had not found this information to be too useful and were still unable to verify what kind of work his older brother had been doing.

This was not the older brother he had known. All these years, he had been deceived by his only blood relative in this world whom he had loved more than anyone; whom he had trusted more than anyone. The truth had given Kyosuke a great shock, and never mind about losing his voice; he had lost his appetite as well as the will to live for anything. Both the doctor and the nurse had been concerned that he wasn't eating, so they tried to talk with him, only to receive no response. At that time, Kyosuke had just laid

still on the bed, as if awaiting his death. He had cried, reminiscing on the memories he had with his older brother. And he had cried, realizing that those memories had been false. Just as his condition had been growing worse, that man had suddenly shown up in Kyosuke's hospital room.

“You are Miyama Kyosuke?”

Half-conscious, Kyosuke had heard a low, baritone voice.

“.....Who are you.....?”

It had been already dusk and dim inside the hospital room. Because of the light coming in from the hallway, Kyosuke had not been able to clearly see the man's face at first, but he could tell that the man was tall with a nice build. The man had been wearing a black coat, and this had reminded Kyosuke of a shinigami<sup>4</sup>.

Am I finally going to die? He had thought. I can finally go to where my big brother is.

When he sees his older brother in heaven, the first thing he was going to do was ask him why he lied. As he had absent-mindedly thought these things, the man had approached his bedside and fixed his stare at Kyosuke. As his eyes had adjusted to the darkness, the man's face had become visible to him. He was handsome, with black, deep eyes and a stiff expression. He had a high nose bridge and thin lips. Although he was handsome, his face held no expression and made him seem like a puppet. That was why Kyosuke had thought he was a 'shinigami'. At that time, as Kyosuke looked up at him, the 'shinigami's' lips moved.

“Miyama Kyosuke.....you almost died, huh?”

“.....”

Perhaps he was going to be taken to Hades. So be it, Kyosuke had thought and stretched out his right hand from underneath his bedspread straight towards the man.

He had wanted the man to grab his hand and take him to his older brother. As Kyosuke prayed for this, the man's monotonous voice rang in his ear.

“I would've liked it if you died. Let me be clear: Don't investigate into this.”

“.....?”

This man showed no sign of taking his hand and instead seemed to bear malice towards him. Yet even more than malice, the man bore a grudge; an intent to kill. Realizing this had given Kyosuke a chill. Feeling frightened, Kyosuke tried to pull his hand away, but the man had firmly caught his wrist.

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<sup>4</sup> Shinigami: Death God

“It hurts...” Kyosuke had cried out, grimacing from the firm grip on his wrist, yet the man continued speaking above him.

“Do you understand? Forget about your brother’s death. Don’t go seeking the reasons unless you want the police to know that your brother was involved with the yakuza.”

“...Huh....?”

The pain in his wrist had prevented him from thinking clearly so that what the man had said didn’t sink in. Kyosuke didn’t understand. As the man coldly looked down at Kyosuke, who could only look back at him, he said, “*I* ordered to have your brother killed.”

“What.....!?”

Now Kyosuke understood. He had tried to sit up and grab the man, but even though he had wanted to, he wasn’t able to do that because of his haggard condition. Kyosuke had no choice but to lay there on the bed and look up at the man, who had sneered and violently let go of Kyosuke’s arm.

“It hurts!” Kyosuke had inadvertently cried out again when the man had roughly tossed his arm back down. At this, the man had sneered again and began to say things Kyosuke had never dreamed could be real.

“Your brother knew too much inside information about the Okawa. That’s why we had to dispose of him. If you want to tell this to the police, go ahead. That is, if you’re fine with them knowing that your brother was involved with the yakuza.”

“.....” The yakuza? That’s ridiculous! He had thought, but was unable to speak. However, the man in front of him continued.

“Shinjuku is our territory. If you value your life, don’t go near there. I am Kanou, the wakagashira of the Okawa, and if I so much as see a glimpse of you there, you won’t get away. Understand?” The man had said and quickly averted his gaze as he left the room.

“.....Urgh!” Kyosuke bit his lip, unable to bear the pain that had seized his whole body when he had tried to get up and chase after the man. Meanwhile, the door had already closed and the man had disappeared from Kyosuke’s sight.

“...A dream...?” he had muttered, yet being fully aware that this was reality. This conversation had been so sudden that he was unable to fully grasp it. But he had understood and found out the name of the man who had killed his older brother. He then repeated that name.



“Kanou...from Okawa...”

At the same time, he had drilled the unfamiliar word ‘wakagashira’ into his head. Kyosuke had reached out towards the call button and was about to call the nurse. He was going to get the nurse to contact the police and tell them everything that had happened in great detail. But.....his hand was not moving like he wanted it to. Although he had been desperately impatient to tell them, he suddenly remembered what Kanou had told him.

*“If you want to tell this to the police, go ahead. That is, if you’re fine with them finding out that your brother was involved with the yakuza.”*

“....That’s.....ridiculous!” He had blurted out, and his hand, holding the call button, fell down on top of his body. That his older brother had been involved with the yakuza was absolutely unbelievable! However, he didn’t think that a yakuza would come all this way to visit him just to tell him a lie. The purpose of Kanou’s visit had probably been to threaten him into silence. It had seemed that he had threatened him to make sure that he, who had failed to die, would not do anything unnecessary.

*“I would’ve liked it if you died.”*

Kyosuke had shivered as he recalled the man’s indifferent tone of voice and cruel eyes. Had his older brother really been involved with the yakuza? I can’t believe it, he had thought. But the fact remained that no matter how hard the police searched to find what kind of a job his older brother had been doing, there were no answers except for this now ‘unbelievable’ result. His older brother had been earning a lot of money since about one year ago. Where had that money been coming from? What if his older brother’s source of income had indeed been coming from the ‘Okawa’?

And had the ‘Okawa’ taken his older brother’s life? What had happened to his older brother? Why did his older brother have had to die in such a brutal way? He wanted to know. A strong urge to know had welled up inside Kyosuke.

From that day on, Kyosuke had willingly begun working hard at the rehabilitation center. And after that, with the help of Sahashi, he had transferred to this rehabilitation center and was recovering until he could lead a somewhat normal life again. There was only one reason for Kyosuke becoming so desperate – it was to avenge his older brother. He was going to go to Shinjuku and find out once and for all if his older brother had been involved with the Okawa. In order to do that, first, he had to get better, not wait around to die; he had made up his mind that he was going to live.

That was his decision.

## 「Chapter 2」

There was a library in the hospital with computers, and patients could freely browse the web. When Kyosuke had begun to walk, he started to hang out at the library and research about the Okawa. He had quickly found out that it was a rather large organization. Through an underground website, Kyosuke had found that many of the crimes the Okawa committed had been concealed, since both the police and politicians had ties with the group, so this had made Kyosuke nervous to tell the police about Kanou, so he decided not to do it. The police had covered up the crimes, so it's likely they weren't going to do anything even if he told them. Because of this issue, Kyosuke had wanted to avoid having the public find out that his older brother had been involved with the yakuza until he himself confirmed the relationship his older brother had with the Okawa.

First, his top priority was to regain his health. Then, when he could move freely, he would head towards Shinjuku. He hadn't decided how he was going to do it, but he was going to sneak into the Okawa and investigate from within about their connection to his older brother.

Kyosuke prayed to do this as soon as possible. He had gritted his teeth and endured the rehabilitation center, but ever since he had come here, an unexpected obstacle stood in the way.

“Kyosuke-kun, you wanted to become a doctor, didn't you?” Sahashi, who came here as usual to see him, had made a sudden comment. “I heard from the doctor that hopefully you can be discharged from the hospital soon. I hope it's okay, but I picked up the documents to re-enroll you into high school. It's a boarding school in Kansai; a private school and affiliated with a university that has a high level Medical Department and a good reputation.”

“.....Umm.....” Kyosuke was left in a daze at this sudden offer.

“News about the incident hasn't reached Kansai, so I think you can have some peace of mind there. You're behind the rest of your class, but it seems that at this school, there are plenty of students who have repeated a year in school due to various circumstances. I think this environment will be easy for you to live in.”

“.....I'm sorry you had to do all of this for me, but.....” Feeling confused, Kyosuke had tried to think of a way to refuse because there was no way he was going to go to Kansai.

“There’s nothing to be sorry for. Your older brother also dreamed of you becoming a doctor. Of course if you go to Kansai, I will continue to support you, so you can rest assured.”

“.....” That ‘support’ is unnecessary, Kyosuke had swallowed these words that had gathered in his throat and wondered if there was any way to get out of this. But he couldn’t think of a single good method. Time had passed and the day for him to be discharged was approaching. Sahashi had not only taken care of the admission procedures, he had also gathered all the information about the kind of classes Kyosuke would take at the school. There wasn’t a single reason to refuse now. If he was going to be forced to do this, he had said that at the very least he wasn’t going to leave Tokyo until the man who had killed his older brother was found, but he was told that he wouldn’t be able to do anything even if he was in Tokyo.

Kyosuke had absolutely no desire to go to the high school in Kansai since he had lost his dream of becoming a doctor. All he wanted to do now was get revenge on the person who had taken the life of his beloved older brother. He also wanted to know what his older brother had been hiding. He had thought about suggesting to Sahashi that he wanted to go to a school in Tokyo, not in Kansai, but when he had proposed this, Sahashi said, “I think it would be best for you if you left Tokyo,” and began persuading Kyosuke instead. Because Sahashi was speaking out of concern for him, he had no choice but to agree with him on this.

Finally, it was decided that he was to be discharged on the weekend, but Kyosuke remembered one last strategy. He didn’t know whether the probability of it being a success was high or low, but if he didn’t do it, he would regret it. Kyosuke prepared himself for the worst and got in touch with Sahashi.

“Will I receive immediate money for living expenses?”

Before he was discharged, Kyosuke’s plan was to sneak out of the hospital and hide in Shinjuku. The name ‘Okawa’ had never appeared in the thorough investigation Sahashi was doing, so Kyosuke guessed that Sahashi would not find him right away if he went to Shinjuku in order to get near that group. In the hospital, there was practically no reason to use money, so Kyosuke had only several thousand yen. He didn’t know how long it would be until he could sneak into the Okawa, so naturally, he needed money in order to live on his own. That’s why Kyosuke had asked Sahashi for cash, and Sahashi

had immediately complied and had given him one hundred thousand yen<sup>5</sup> that same day. Kyosuke had wanted two to three hundred thousand yen, but all of his money had already been transferred to the school to cover the living expenses, and besides, he had already said that he could eat breakfast and dinner at the dorm, so he couldn't say he wanted more cash.

“Tell me if this isn't enough. You will receive your uniform tomorrow. And also, I'm not too sure you're going to like it, but I also prepared some traditional clothes for you. It's my gift for your admission to the school.”

“.....Thank you, you didn't have to.....”

Although he knew that both Sahashi and his family were rich, he still felt bad about Sahashi giving him clothes, so he had initially refused this, but Sahashi won in the end.

“This is a gift, so don't worry about it.”

After Sahashi left, Kyosuke had wondered for a while whether he should run away that night or the next day. He needed regular clothes, but Sahashi had prepared him traditional clothes, and he was sure he would stand out among the yakuza if he wore them. He now had money, so he wanted to get out of the hospital as soon as possible.

It's not like I completely don't have any clothes, Kyosuke had thought, and decided to run away from the hospital that same night. The night nurse did checks at midnight, two o'clock, and four o'clock. After the four o'clock checks, he would quietly slip out of his room and head towards the train station. Soon the first train would be on its way, and he was going to ride it to Shinjuku.

With that plan in mind, Kyosuke spent the rest of the day trying to be as calm as possible. He couldn't arouse any suspicion. He would be trouble if they mistook it for him becoming ill and increased the number of check-ups on him. For a moment, he had thought about leaving an apology letter for Sahashi, who had helped him out so much, but could only think of writing repetitive things like, 'Thank you' and 'I'm sorry', so he decided against it. He wondered if Sahashi was going to search for him. He probably would, but still, no matter how he looked at it, they were strangers. Sahashi was only helping him out of kindness, and it was not his duty to protect him. He was going to run away on his own, so he wanted Sahashi to let him be. He had thought about putting that into the letter, but had trouble choosing the right words, so in the end, gave up.

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<sup>5</sup> One hundred thousand yen is about \$1,000

When the four o'clock checks were over, Kyosuke quietly slipped out of bed, quickly changed into his jeans and a fleece and snuck out of the hospital with his shoes in his hand. The reason he wasn't wearing shoes was to avoid having his footsteps heard. Naturally, he couldn't walk the same as before the incident, but he could walk about the same pace as a healthy person and could easily climb up stairs. Kyosuke found where the emergency exit was, went out, and put on his shoes. He wanted to run, but he thought that would make him stand out, so he walked softly across the hospital vicinity and out the back gate.

Ever since Kyosuke had transferred to this hospital, he had practically never gone outside. He looked-up the way to get to the train station on the Internet, but even though he had drilled the route into his head, he now lost almost all sense of direction, because the road he was on was wide and felt like it didn't match with what he had seen on the map. But still, he began walking, guessing that this was the way.

Although it was April, the open air before dawn was chilly and Kyosuke's whole body immediately grew cold. His body grew stiff and walking gradually became difficult. At the rehabilitation center and within the hospital, he could walk as usual, but outside and on what happened to be an uneven road, he couldn't get accustomed to walking and stumbled many times. The distance to the train station on foot was close to thirty minutes. Unfortunately, even if he wanted to take a taxi, not a single car passed by, and even if he was fortunate enough to encounter an empty taxi, it was wise not to ride in it, because he could be traced that way. Deciding this, Kyosuke gave up and continued to desperately walk forward. If he walked, he would reach the station eventually. He had no choice but to keep going forward. As he repeated this to himself, Kyosuke suddenly realized that he gained strength and smiled wryly. After the incident, when he had lost the desire to live; he didn't care if he died or couldn't walk. He had felt helpless. The shock of losing his older brother had been massive, especially since he had a dependent personality and always relied on his older brother. When Kyosuke had relied on his kind older brother, his older brother had always immediately stretched out a helping hand and had protected Kyosuke from all hardships, and after their parents had passed away, his concern for Kyosuke grew even more. Though they had a five-year age difference, at that time, his older brother had not even turned twenty and was still a 'child' himself. As Kyosuke recalled his wretched past, he suddenly realized that the sky was growing light and looked around him. There was still time before daybreak, but gradually it was becoming very bright. When he looked up at the sky, he saw, in the near-darkness, a star faintly

twinkling.

“.....Big brother, look.”

The lightened sky made Kyosuke's uneasiness disappear. As he headed towards the fading star, the words he had muttered began to encourage him. Somehow, he now felt light on his feet, so giving himself a quick nod, Kyosuke decided he should keep what had happened this past year a secret and avenge his older brother. With that, he continued to walk towards the train station.

\* \* \* \*

Fortunately, the train was already there, so Kyosuke didn't have to wait and was able to board safely. He changed trains and rode for about one hour to Shinjuku. But once he got there, how was he going to sneak into the Okawa? He couldn't think of a single good method. He suspected that the yakuza area was Kabukicho, but Kabukicho was big, so there weren't only yakuza there. Was there a way to distinguish yakuza members belonging to the Okawa? If he asked, he would probably find out, but was he brave enough to speak to thugs? Kyosuke wasn't too sure he was. He was prepared to fight with the wakagashira whom he despised – Kanou – but in order to do that, he needed to get to him in one piece. From the information he had looked up on the Internet, he discovered that a 'wakagashira' was the second in command of a group and was promised a position to be the next leader of the family. The Okawa was quite a large organization and had several hundred members. When the second and third groups were added, it became several thousand. How could he achieve his revenge against the second in command of such a large organization? No good ideas crossed his mind. For now, he would find a way to sneak into the group and then await his chance. Believing that this was his only way, Kyosuke thought that it would be hard to 'sneak into the group' and let out a sigh.

He arrived in Shinjuku and headed towards Kabukicho. Since it was still early in the morning, the whole town was rather deserted. There was a group of people who looked like they had been drinking all night long, and hostesses who tried to invite customers into their stores, but there were no people who looked like thugs. Having no other choice, Kyosuke entered a 24-hour coffee shop and decided he was going to kill some time there while he planned his next move. Actually, there was one thing about Kabukicho that weighed on his mind. The bar that his older brother had worked for in the past was also in Kabukicho. Rather than aimlessly search around Kabukicho for the

members of the Okawa, he should start with gathering information about his older brother first. The police had searched everywhere in order to know whether or not there was someone who had a motive for killing his older brother, but had not found anything about the work his older brother had done after he had left the bartender job in Kabukicho. If even the police searched and hadn't found anything, Kyosuke didn't think that an amateur like him, who was still a child and not even twenty, would gain any results. Nevertheless, I can't give up, Kyosuke thought and clenched his fist.

Kyosuke hung around at the coffee shop until around 10 am, after which he guessed that people would be crowding the streets, so he left to go search for the bar his older brother had worked in. He had the map memorized, but when he arrived at the address of the shop, he saw that the name of the shop had changed.

“.....”

It seemed like the shop was still a bar, but because it was before noon it wasn't open. If the name of the shop had changed then it was the usual case that the employees and the manager had also changed. Naturally, the customers had definitely changed as well. He gave up for now. Instead, he planned on waiting until night to visit this shop again, but it seemed that he would still be wasting his time here. Nevertheless, he didn't have any other means of searching for clues about his older brother.

Kyosuke stood in front of the shop absentmindedly. He didn't want to leave. When he peered inside the shop, a voice called out to him from behind, “Hey, what're you doing!?”

Kyosuke spun around, startled.

“.....”

He lost his voice at the sight before his eyes. Before he knew it, Kyosuke was surrounded by thugs.

“Say something! Hey!” A young thug called out to him. It seemed like it should be easy to talk to the guy wearing a flashy sukajan satin jacket, who seemed to be about the same age as Kyosuke, but to Kyosuke, who had never had any experience with anyone like this until now, he seemed extremely menacing, so Kyosuke stood there stupefied.

“I'm asking you what you're doing sneaking around here!”

Young thugs weren't an unusual thing, but when they saw that they were clearly being feared, they put on a false bravado and intimidated him further. The thugs continued to act like being sadistic was their hobby.

“We won't know if you keep silent!”

They pushed the pale-faced Kyosuke and made him unable to speak even more, but when one of the thugs threatened him, Kyosuke inadvertently exclaimed.

“You know this is the Okawa territory, don’t you?”

“The Okawa!!”

What a coincidence! This was the grace of God! There was no way he could miss this chance. As if he was just going to waste this heaven’s blessing! The moment he thought this, some kind of change happened in Kyosuke.

“What the hell?” The thug frowned and questioned him, since it seemed he became suspicious of Kyosuke when he had exclaimed so suddenly. But without hesitating, Kyosuke knelt in front of the guy and deeply bowed his head.

“Please! Please let me join the Okawa!”

“*Huuuh?!*” The thug wildly exclaimed and fell silent. It seemed he was quite surprised at seeing Kyosuke kneel and beg like this.

“Please! I- I heard the Okawa are amazing and I really want you to let me join. That’s why I came here to Shinjuku!”

Usually, Kyosuke referred to himself using ‘boku’<sup>6</sup>, but he thought that the yakuza liked people who referred to themselves as ‘ore’<sup>7</sup>, so he instantly changed his way of speaking.

“Reaaaally?”

The thug looked down at Kyosuke with suspicion. The other young thugs around him also warily gazed down at Kyosuke.

“Yes! When I came to Shinjuku before, you guys had a conflict, right? I saw you guys shooting and instantly thought you were amazing! You guys looked so cool! That’s why I admire you, and.....!”

“Shooting in Shinjuku? Ah, you mean last October?”

“Yes!”

Kyosuke immediately nodded enthusiastically at the thug’s words. Last year in October, he saw on television the news that the Okawa had quite an intense gunfight with an opposition group here in Kabukicho. There had been ten or so casualties and twenty people had been arrested. However, only the people from the second and third groups had been arrested, and the opposition group had all its members arrested including the leader. The Okawa, on the other hand, had been left unharmed. Shuddering, Kyosuke had

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<sup>6</sup> Casual way for boys/men to say ‘I’

<sup>7</sup> An informal, casual, used mostly by men, and sometimes seen as tough way to say ‘I’

watched the early morning scene of the Kabukicho streets covered with blood, but now, he thought he should make use of that information here and animated his voice even more.

“I admire how cool you guys are! I definitely want to join the Okawa, too! How do I join? Please, please tell me!”

“You idiot, it’s not like anyone can just join,” the young thug said, but Kyosuke could tell from the pleased look on his face that he was in a very good mood now that the group he belonged to was getting praised. “That’s all I’ve gotta say, but I’ll at least hear you out. There’re some things to do first. I’ll introduce you to my aniki<sup>8</sup> so you can get a job. So how about it? Wanna give it a shot?”

“Yes! Thank you!”

This was godsend! Was this heaven’s command or his older brother’s guidance? Since meeting these thugs happened upon coming here to the shop where his older brother had worked at, surely it was his older brother helping him from heaven. Kyosuke hadn’t thought that he would be able to get to the Okawa so quickly. I’m so lucky, he thought and secretly clenched his fist.

“Then let’s go get breakfast and collect some money.”

“.....Ah, okay!”

Follow me, the thug jerked his chin, and Kyosuke began walking after the thugs.

“What’s your name?”

Being asked this only now, Kyosuke was about to tell him his real name, but thought that false names were surely used here, so he quickly decided on a name.

“Mihara.”

“Your first name.” It’s hard to call each other by last names, isn’t it? The thug said, which didn’t fully make sense to Kyosuke and he stared at him.

“Ka- Kaoru,” he thought about making up a name completely different from his real name, but decided to mix in some ‘truth’ here since he was worried that he was going to be careless and react too slow when they called him by a completely different name.

“Kaoru, huh? You look like a girl and have a girly name too.”

The thug smiled and gently reached out and touched Kyosuke’s cheek.

“.....!”

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<sup>8</sup> Aniki: a term used for a Yakuza of older age or senior rank within the family; a term of respect.



Surprised at this sudden move, Kyosuke jumped despite himself, and seeing this, the other guys walking along with the thug burst out laughing.

“What, Kouta, couldn’t resist, huh?”

“Shut up.”

It seemed that the thug’s name was Kouta. Seeing that the others had made fun of him, it seemed that he was the youngest out of the five thugs.

“I told you I like girls more than guys!” Kouta retorted and then stared at Kyosuke who was unintentionally looking at him.

“You too! Don’t react so weirdly!”

“I- I’m sorry.”

He thought that it was probably not right to apologize, since he had to be liked, but he quickly bowed his head anyway. However, it seemed that Kouta was quite a simple guy. His mood had improved just from that. At the same time, it seemed that he had taken a liking to Kyosuke.

“He’s my subordinate, so don’t mislead him,” he said to his gang and returned his gaze to Kyosuke. “I’m Kouta. You can call me aniki.”

“I understand, aniki.”

When he replied immediately, Kouta’s mood improved even more, and he gave a thin grin and roughly petted Kyosuke on the head.

“Alright! You’re so obedient! Nice to meet you, Kaoru!”

“N- nice to meet you, too.”

Kouta had petted him so powerfully that Kyosuke had almost toppled over. Although Kyosuke definitely didn’t feel like thanking him, he thought that he should show more of how ‘obedient’ he was, so he forced a smile and thanked Kouta. After that, Kouta split up from his gang and took Kyosuke along with him into a small kissaten.

“Welcome.”

“Breakfast, Mama. Him, too.”

There were no customers inside the shop. On the other side of the bar counter stood an older, beautiful, but gloomy, woman.

“I always eat here. My subordinates don’t need to pay. I’ll introduce you to Mama,” Kouta said proudly after they sat down facing each other at a table for four, then he turned around to Mama, who was carrying over water.

“Mama, this is Kaoru, my subordinate as of today. Kaoru, this is Yukiko-Mama, ugly-looking but great at cooking.”

“Well, aren’t you in a good mood? Because of your first subordinate?”

He heard Mama laugh, but when she was near enough, Kyosuke got somewhat a strange feeling and stared hard at her. She was rather tall for a woman.

“Whoops! I forgot something important!” It seemed Kouta had noticed Kyosuke staring and added with a smile, “We call her Mama but she’s actually a man.”

“Huh!?” A man? Kyosuke thought and loudly exclaimed with surprise.

“I don’t have balls or a dick anymore. There’s a hole now instead. If you’d like, I’ll let you fuck me,” Yukiko-Mama narrowed her eyes with a smile, and Kyosuke was at a loss for words, but to his surprise, Kouta was okay with this.

“He’s inexperienced. You’re a virgin, right?”

“Oh, then, how about I’ll be your first?” Yukiko amused herself, but Kyosuke was stunned, not knowing how he should answer, and looked hesitatingly at Kouta.

“When this happens, you say ‘that’s sick’.”

“It’s not sick, it feels good! I hope you will try it too, Kouta.”

“Don’t say such sick things!”

Yukiko and Kouta continued to joke, changing the topic of the conversation.

I’m saved, Kyosuke secretly let out a sigh.

“The morning course, okay? Right?”

“Yeah.”

Yukiko took their orders, looked at Kouta, who had replied cheerfully, and shrugged.

“Just now you said something like, ‘My subordinate doesn’t need to pay me money’, but the one paying is your aniki, isn’t it?”

“Sh- shut up...you tranny!” Kouta angrily exclaimed. It seemed that Yukiko had hit a soft spot.

But perhaps Yukiko was used to this, because she smirked, purposefully dropped her voice and told Kyosuke, “This kid is nothing, but this kid’s aniki is sensational, well, since he’s the wakagashira of the Okawa, after all.”

“The wakagashira!?” Once again, Kyosuke loudly exclaimed with surprise, but it seemed that this was not an appropriate situation to be so surprised at, so he received puzzled glances from Yukiko and Kouta.

“What is it? What’s wrong? Why are you so worked up?”

“What, you know the boss?”

“N- no.....is that boss the second in command of the group? I just think it’s

amazing that such a great man is your aniki, Kouta-san.” As Kyosuke desperately tried to smooth things over, he tried really hard to stop himself from shaking.

“Oh yeah, this guy is a yakuza enthusiast.” Fortunately, it seemed that the simple-minded Kouta believed Kyosuke’s act and began explaining to Yukiko with a proud, knowledgeable look.

“A yakuza enthusiast? What’s that?”

“He said he saw the gun-fight with the Aoshima last year, that’s why he wants to join our group. And he probably did a lot of research. About the wakagashira and stuff.” Isn’t that cute? Kouta laughed in front of him, and Kyosuke secretly let out a sigh of relief.

“Really? That’s interesting. A yakuza enthusiast, aren’t you?”

Luckily, it seemed that Yukiko also believed Kouta.

“That’s right – so bring us breakfast for two now.”

“Okay, okay. I’m putting this on Kanou-san’s tab.”

“.....!”

Kyosuke was aware that there was only one person who held the position of wakagashira – Kanou – but the moment he heard the name of the man whom he hated so much, his heart beat so violently that he couldn’t suppress it and almost let out a gasp. This was a revelation of God, after all. No. This was his dead older brother’s guidance. He hadn’t thought that he would get to Kanou so quickly! One could say that he was now trembling with excitement.

Kyosuke was trembling slightly, and he was aware that food would not go down his throat right now, but he couldn’t arouse suspicion, so telling himself that he had to try to stay as calm as possible, Kyosuke began to desperately think of how he was going to get his revenge after he got to Kanou.

## 「Chapter 3」

After breakfast, Kouta took Kyosuke around to several host and hostess bars to ‘collect money’ like he had said.

So this is ‘bodyguard money’? Kyosuke thought, feeling flustered and surprised to see with his own eyes this absurd yakuza system he had already read about on the Internet but obeyed Kouta anyway.

“Then let’s return to the office.” I’ll introduce you to the boss there, Kouta told Kyosuke making him panic immediately and think about what he should do once he was there. If the ‘boss’ was the wakagashira Kanou, meeting him now would be extremely bad since Kanou would recognize Kyosuke. They would find out that the name he had used was false, and there was the danger that even his mission would be discovered. But what reason could he give if he said right now, ‘It’s okay, you don’t need to introduce me’? Unable to come up with anything, Kyosuke faltered as he let himself get taken to the office of the Okawa, which stood in the hidden parts of Kabukicho.

“O-ho, Kouta! Looks like you scored yourself a babe, huh?”

The moment they entered the office, a bunch of bad looking guys surrounded Kouta and Kyosuke, teasing.

“What a pretty boy. I knew it, Kouta, so you *are* interested in *that* kind of stuff.”

“Noo.”

“I get it~ No girl wants to bang you, so you *converted*, huh?”

“Not want to bang him?! That can’t be!”

As they all took turns teasing him, Kouta proceeded deeper into the office and opened the door in the very back.

“Excuse me. I brought a guy who says he wants to join the group. Is the boss here?” Kouta asked a stone-faced man inside the room in a different tone of voice.

“Aniki Kanou ain’t in today,” the man replied roughly and stared hard at Kyosuke. “That him?”

“Yes. I thought I would let him work under me for a while.”

“It’s 10 years too early for you to be having subordinates, but whatever.”

It seemed that this middle-aged man also had a higher position within this group, and it looked like he let Kyosuke join the Okawa without him even meeting Kanou. Because Kyosuke hadn’t imagined that things would be moving this quickly, he was completely unprepared for taking his revenge. If he stayed by Kouta, there was definitely

a chance he would come face to face with Kanou eventually.

Before then, I need some kind of weapon – a blade that I could kill Kanou with, Kyosuke muttered to himself as Kouta introduced the man to him and encouraged Kyosuke to also introduce himself.

“This is Mihara Kaoru. Kaoru, this is Iwatsuki, the boss’s assistant.”

“N- nice to meet you.”

Bowing down to his toes would be stared at with contempt, so hesitating slightly, Kyosuke gave a small bow, trying to look like a thug.

“Where you from?”

Kyosuke had found out on the Internet that the wakagashira of the Okawa had three assistants. Iwatsuki was the oldest among them and ranked next in terms of power after the wakagashira. Seeing the man who was the third in command within the group made Kyosuke feel more and more terrified.

When this interviewer began questioning this unexpected applicant, he had a severe look in his eyes, which was incomparable to the look a mere underling like Kouta had given him when he had questioned him before.

“T- Tokyo.”

Lying would definitely be obvious. That’s why Kyosuke decided that he would say some of the truth.

“Where, in Tokyo?”

“Mi- Mitaka.....”

“Age?”

“Ei- eighteen.....”

He lied about his age making himself one year younger and the gleam in Iwatsuki’s eyes grew sharper.

“.....!”

Could he see right through him? Cold sweat ran down Kyosuke’s back.

“You...somewhere I.....”

The moment he heard Iwatsuki mutter that, Kyosuke panicked instantly, thinking he should run. Although Kyosuke himself didn’t think so, people had often said that he had his brother’s face. He didn’t know what kind of connection the Okawa had with his older brother, but he assumed that because the wakagashira of the Okawa – Kanou – had killed his older brother, the group either hated his older brother or found him disagreeable. If they found out that they were brothers, they would probably kill him too.

However, even if they didn't find out that he was his brother, they would probably start by severely questioning him for the reason why he tried to get into the group using a false name.

What should I do? He was well aware that he was turning pale in the face. His heartbeat sounded like a fire alarm. He was starting to feel sick. But then, all of a sudden he was saved.

"Iwatsuki-san, please don't scare him. If you stare at him this much, he's gonna piss his pants," Kouta, the one who had said he was going to make him his subordinate, told Iwatsuki.

"Then hurry up and teach him!" Iwatsuki gave a wry smile and turned his gaze towards Kouta. Inadvertently, a deep sigh escaped Kyosuke's lips.

"Were there good-looking girls at the shop yesterday? Ah, never mind, work hard," Iwatsuki, who seemed to have given up in trying to recall where he had this 'recognition' of Kyosuke, grinned and slapped Kyosuke's shoulder.

"Th- thank you. I will try my best!"

It was a little too powerful, so Kyosuke almost toppled over but desperately stood his ground and bowed to Iwatsuki.

"That reminds me. Where do you live? Mitaka?" Kouta called out to Kyosuke.

"Ah, no....."

Where should he say? Because he was panicking he hesitated for a moment, so Kouta said, "What, you ran away?" Not only did his assumption give Kyosuke an excuse, he was also kind enough to try offering him a place to stay. "You can stay at my place for now then. It's big, so one more person is nothing."

"Th- thank you, aniki." I'm saved, Kyosuke thought and smiled at Kouta. Seeing this, Kouta suddenly looked terribly shy and scratched his head.

"Of course. I'm your leader, after all."

"Ha ha ha!!" Iwatsuki burst out laughing as he watched Kouta and Kyosuke. "More like a leader playing house."

"Playing house? .....That's mean, Iwatsuki-san." Kouta pouted, looking exactly like a child, and Kyosuke almost smiled but controlled himself.

"I've got business to do, so hurry and get the hell out of here. I'm busy, too, you know," Iwatsuki slapped Kouta on the back and led the two towards the door.

"Then excuse us."

Imitating Kouta, who said thank you, Kyosuke also said, "Thank you," bowed,

and headed for the door. But at that moment, the door in front of him burst open, and a young thug flew into the room.

“S-sir! The boss is here.....!”

“What? He didn’t plan on coming here today,” Iwatsuki frowned at the flustered thug. The thug glanced at Kouta, and Kouta frowned at him also and said ‘What?’ So the thug turned back to Iwatsuki and quickly began to explain.

“He’s looking for Kouta and he’s in a terrible mood.”

“Huh?” Kouta looked shocked when he heard this and immediately went pale.

“I- I didn’t do anything, you know?”

Although Iwatsuki shot a glance at the scared-looking Kouta, he then immediately looked away from him and asked the young thug, “Where’s the boss?”

“H- he will come here.....” soon, the thug was just about to add, but then the door behind him violently opened again and another thug rushed in.

“It- it’s the boss,” at the same time he shouted that, he dodged to the side and held the door open.

“.....!”

The moment Kyosuke saw a tall figure enter through the open door, he almost cried out, but bit his lip and held it back instead.

The man he despised – the person he swore to definitely get revenge on – was right in front of him now. As usual, he looked completely alert. He was wearing a dark-colored suit perfectly fit for his body and had on black leather shoes that were so shiny you could see your own reflection in them. His hairstyle was also perfect, and naturally, he didn’t have any stubble. At first glance, he looked like a high-ranking official or an elite businessman, but the air around him was clearly different from that. The sharp, penetrating glint in his eyes was powerful enough to terrify anyone who caught his gaze. Kyosuke also froze over with fear but immediately came back to his senses and thought he needed to hide himself from him right away. However, there was nowhere to hide. He thought about casually moving himself to hide behind Kouta, but that would probably just make him stand out, so he didn’t move. Left with nothing else to do, he tried to hide his face by looking down. He didn’t look all that much different now from when Kanou had visited him in the hospital room, but Kanou didn’t know that he could now walk, so perhaps he thought that he was still at the hospital. He had no choice but to hope for this. As Kyosuke thought this, Kanou shot a piercing look straight at the trembling Kouta, but instead of Kouta speaking, Iwatsuki asked in a nervous tone of voice: “Everything ok,

boss? Didn't you say you weren't planning on coming here toda-"

"Yeah."

The moment he heard Kanou answer in a low voice, a shiver ran through Kyosuke's whole body. It was the voice he had heard at the hospital room. Even though just his presence was enough to shock Kyosuke, hearing the low, baritone voice he knew all too well instantly brought him back to the past.

He hated him. He despised him. How dare he kill his older brother!

Kyosuke inadvertently looked up and desperately suppressed his urge to want to be seen, because he knew he couldn't stand out. He would quietly stand in this spot and make sure he was not recognized. If he were recognized, he would have no choice but to feign ignorance. But would that really work? That was a mystery.

Before he knew it, Kyosuke began to tremble. There was no guarantee that Kanou, who had killed his older brother, wouldn't kill him too. If anything, he feared that it was more likely that he would kill him now. He didn't want to die in vain without even taking revenge. Before, he had thought that the best luck had swooped down on him, but now, he thought that he had probably thrown himself into a terrible misfortune. Right now, he believed that he would be killed, so he wanted to fight back at the very least.

I have to get some kind of a weapon, Kyosuke thought, shaking and looking around and discovered a wooden sword on display. If his true identity were to be discovered, he would seize that wooden sword and strike at Kanou. He wasn't sure if it would wound him, but he was not going to get killed without doing anything.

Now is not the time to tremble, Kyosuke thought, clenching his fist and letting out a secret sigh between his tightened lips as he tried to calm himself down.

"Aniki?" Iwatsuki called out to Kanou, looking uncertain, because he had not said anything else after 'yeah'.

"Kouta," Kanou directed his words to Kouta instead.

"Ye- yes!" Kouta's pompous attitude had disappeared off somewhere, and he replied in a loud voice, standing straight and stock-still.

"I heard you got yourself a subordinate."

The moment he heard Kanou say this, Kyosuke's heart beat even more violently, and he was unable to keep himself from trembling. The reason Kanou was here was because of him, after all. With his face turned downwards, Kyosuke located the wooden sword with his eyes and prepared himself to break into a run at any moment.



“Ye- yes,” Kouta turned around to glance at Kyosuke.

“Him?”

He knew that Kanou was looking at him. Soon, he would surely say, “*Do you have any idea who he is?*” When that happens, he would break into a run. Kyosuke heard Kouta’s nervous voice in his ear as he tried to remain standing on his shaking legs.

“Ye- yes. His name is Mihara Kaoru. He says he admires the Okawa, so I made him my subordinate.....,” with that, Kouta grabbed Kyosuke, who was standing around trying to hide behind him and dragged him forward.

“Hey, introduce yourself.”

“.....N- nice to meet you.....”

He is going to find out. As Kyosuke braced himself, he had no courage to look up, so he bowed still looking down and prepared to die as he felt Kanou’s sharp, knife-like gaze pierce through him.

Big brother, I’m sorry. Looks like I’m going to die before I take revenge. But I won’t die in vain. He braced himself, and the moment he looked up, he met Kanou’s eyes and froze on the spot.

His gaze was piercing. It was an utterly intense, penetrating sort of gaze. Kyosuke’s knees felt weak, and he couldn’t move. This is the end, he thought, closing his eyes and awaiting his fate. He will go to where his older brother was. This was the moment he had dreamt of many times. But he had regrets now, after all. Now, he wished the police investigation team could help him, but he had disappeared without saying anything to Sahashi, who had helped him out so much, so he had no other choice but to accept that he could not expect their help now.

It’s over, Kyosuke thought, hanging his head. But that very next moment, he heard Kanou say something unexpected.

“Mihara Kaoru, huh? I like you. I’ll take you.”

“A- aniki?”

“Boss?”

Both Kouta and Iwatsuki cried out in astonishment. Kyosuke also didn’t immediately understand what had been said to him and looked up again feeling very confused.

“.....!”

He met Kanou’s eyes for the second time and held-in his gasp when he saw that sharp, penetrating look.

But Kanou smirked at Kyosuke and said, "I'll make him my woman. You understand, Kouta?"

"Wo- woman?!" Kouta cried out in astonishment, and Iwatsuki frowned. Everyone inside the room froze. Only Kanou was smiling, looking calm and composed.

"Understand?" Kanou said to Kouta as if urging him for an answer and then suddenly reached out and grabbed Kyosuke's arm.

"P- please stop!" Inadvertently, Kyosuke let that slip out of his mouth having been seized by fear. But Kanou didn't listen.

"Come."

That's all he said and began to walk, dragging the pale-faced Kyosuke with him. Kyosuke had no idea what the hell was happening. Hadn't his true identity been discovered? What did he mean by woman? He was a man! He had been told that he had a girly face, but he had never been mistaken for a girl before! Kanou left the room, pulling the bewildered Kyosuke by the arm and went out of the office. He headed towards a black German car, which stood in front of the building, pushed Kyosuke inside, and got in beside him.

"Drive," Kanou gave a curt order to the thug-looking man sitting in the driver's seat.

"Yes, sir." The driver replied in a monotone, and the car slowly began to accelerate.

"....."

Where were they going? Kyosuke wanted to ask, but didn't have the courage to ask right now. He didn't understand, was Kanou aware of who he was or was he not? What did he mean by 'make him my woman'? 'Lover' was the word that Kyosuke associated with the word 'woman'. Kyosuke didn't know Kanou's sexual orientation. There had never been any gays around Kyosuke before, but he knew that there were types of people who had sexual interest in same sex partners.

Actually, it had seemed that 'Yukiko' from the kissaten was gay. To Kyosuke, 'gay' was only restricted to people who were womanly like Yukiko. Yet Kanou was gay, had taken an interest in him, and wanted to make him his 'woman'. That completely didn't seem like Kanou's true character. Thinking this, Kyosuke hesitated in directly asking him about that, but he still wanted to know his intentions, so he gave Kanou a side-long glance. The more he looked the more he saw how well-featured his face was. It hadn't occurred to him that the man's face was this well-defined. Kyosuke thought this,

and inadvertently stared at Kanou's face. Perhaps because his staring was annoying, Kanou shot a glance at Kyosuke.

".....!"

Kyosuke jumped from this sharp glare, which sent a chill up his spine, but that very next moment, Kanou quickly averted his eyes from Kyosuke.

".....U- um....." Inadvertently, Kyosuke called out to him, because he wanted to confirm whether or not Kanou really remembered him. There was no way he didn't remember him. But if he did remember him, then why did he say that stuff about making him his 'woman'? Kyosuke had no idea. The most desirable thing would be if he 'didn't remember him' and tried to make him into his 'woman', but Kyosuke felt like the probability of that happening was low. It had been close to two years since they had met, so there was a chance he had forgotten him. But if he did remember him, wouldn't he point it out by now? Kyosuke thought as he waited for Kanou's reaction.

"....."

However, there was no sign that Kanou was going to look at Kyosuke. Having no other choice, Kyosuke said again, "Um, excuse me."

But Kanou continued to ignore him.

"Um....."

Certain that he could hear him, Kyosuke spoke for the third time but then heard a threatening voice boom from the driver's seat and froze.

"Shut up, kid!"

".....!"

Kyosuke jumped from the powerful, angry yell and didn't speak anymore. When he looked at Kanou, out of the corner of his eye he saw that he was looking straight ahead and wasn't even about to look his way.

What was happening? He didn't know. As he puzzled over it, Kyosuke had no courage to speak up again and slouched down in the back passenger's seat. This went on for about ten minutes. The car drove into an underground parking garage of a multistory apartment complex and stopped in front of the elevator hall. Without a moments delay, the driver got out of the car and opened the door on Kanou's side. The driver gave a slight bow to Kanou, who got his feet out of the car, and as Kyosuke looked at him, Kanou stared back at him making Kyosuke jump. He was looking at him with a look that was telling him to get out, but Kyosuke felt weak at the knees and couldn't move. So instead, Kanou went around to Kyosuke's side of the car and grabbed the door handle of

Kyosuke's passenger seat, which caused the astonished driver to rush up to Kanou.

"I'm sorry, boss!"

"It's fine," Kanou answered curtly as he opened the door and reached in towards Kyosuke, who leaned away from him by reflex. When Kanou grabbed his arm, Kyosuke didn't even have a moment to resist and got dragged out of the car.

"Thank you," Kanou said to the flustered driver and went towards the auto-locked door, taking out the card key from his pocket and dragging Kyosuke by the arm. Immediately, the automatic door opened, and Kanou stepped inside the elevator hall, dragging Kyosuke inside with him.

"Boss, after this....."

The driver nervously called out to him.

"You can go," Kanou said without even looking back. There was a ding, and the automatic door closed behind them. About the same time as that, Kanou pushed the elevator button, and the elevator door opened. Without saying a word, he shoved Kyosuke inside the elevator, got in after him and then pressed the button to the topmost floor. Immediately, the door closed, and the compartment began to quickly rise up. Feeling dizzy, Kyosuke closed his eyes and heard a low sigh.

"Huh?" Inadvertently, he opened his eyes and looked at the owner of the sigh – the only other man beside Kyosuke in this compartment, Kanou. Kanou instantly looked back at Kyosuke, but then quickly averted his gaze.

"U- um..."

What was the meaning of that sigh just now? Had Kanou realized who he was? I have to hurry and find out, he thought, feeling impatient and began to speak but Kanou didn't look at him anymore. They rode in the elevator until it arrived to the topmost floor.

When the door opened, Kanou powerfully pulled Kyosuke by the arm out of the elevator, and they began walking down the long corridor.

"Um, excuse me. Who are you? Do you want something from me?"

Of course Kyosuke didn't have to ask who he was. He knew both his name and his identity. But if Kanou had no recollection of their meeting in the past, Kyosuke decided to risk and pretend to ask his name even though it might cause trouble. Kyosuke's voice echoed down the hall, but Kanou still continued to not look at him, and when they arrived in front of the room at the far end of the hall, he reached out and pressed the doorbell.

"Welcome back."

Immediately, a thug dashed out through the open door and held the door wide open for Kanou. Still not saying a word, Kanou proceeded inside with his shoes still on and dragged Kyosuke into the room.

“.....??”

The thug was also wearing shoes, so it seemed that this room allowed for wearing one's shoes inside like a hotel.

“Boss, who's he?” The thug quickly followed behind them.

“My lover. He's going to live here as of today,” Kanou replied without even turning around.

“L- lover??”

Leaving behind the stunned blonde thug, Kanou opened the door of the room in the back and stepped in. Kyosuke paused, hesitating to enter the room, but Kanou powerfully pulled him by the arm, and Kyosuke tumbled in.

“Hurts!”

Without having time to stretch his hands out in front of him, Kyosuke hit the floor hard and lay there face-first crying out in pain. Kyosuke heard the sound of the door close and lock behind him, so he quickly sat up and turned around towards the sound.

“Ah.....”

Kanou had his back to the door and was staring right at him. Kanou was dealing with him more like a thing than a human, and in addition to that, he was looking at him with a cruel look as if he were looking at some worthless thing. At that, Kyosuke began to slightly tremble. He wanted to ask Kanou if he realized who he was, but the question was stuck deep in his throat. If the answer were yes, if Kanou discovered his identity through that question, he would definitely take his life without any hesitation. That firm belief grew within Kyosuke.

I don't want to die.....How can I die now!? Kyosuke thought, but not a single way of how to survive this situation came to his mind. Just like a frog being watched by a snake, he crouched on the floor and looked up at Kanou. At that moment, his dearly beloved older brother's kind, beautiful, angelic-like face flashed into his mind.

## 「Chapter 4」

How long had this silence continued? Kyosuke couldn't afford to be aware of that.

“Mihara Kaoru.....you say?”

Kanou's lips moved before him. The moment he heard that low voice break the silence, Kyosuke's whole body grew weak.

“.....Ye- yes.....”

It seemed that Kanou didn't know who he was. It seemed that his goal was to make him his 'woman', and he had brought him here to make him his 'lover' as he had said, and.....

Kyosuke let out a sigh, thinking that first he needed to calm down and take control of his wildly racing thoughts.

“I'm Mihara Kaoru.”

He called himself that and watched Kanou's reaction. As usual, Kanou was looking at Kyosuke like an object, but then quickly averted his eyes and tried to leave the room.

“U- um.....?”

Even when Kyosuke had called himself that, Kanou hadn't reacted by saying something like 'don't lie'. That probably meant that he didn't remember who he was. That's good, Kyosuke, thought, feeling relieved but at the same time, had a funny feeling from the fact that he wasn't acting interested in him at all, even though he had said he was going to make him his 'woman', so he called out behind Kanou to stop him. Kanou stopped and looked over his shoulder at Kyosuke.

“U- um.....why am I here.....?”

Kyosuke somehow managed to choke out, his voice shaking and feeling nervous from the usual intense gaze. Kanou had probably heard him, but after he silently glared at Kyosuke, he unlocked the door and left the room.

“.....”

After Kyosuke let out a deep sigh despite himself, he came to his senses and quickly got up and headed towards the door. He grabbed the doorknob and tried to open it, but it seemed that some kind of heavy object was blocking the door from the outside so it wouldn't budge. He had no idea what the hell was happening. Kyosuke looked around the room he was being confined in. There was nothing inside the room except a king

sized bed. On one side of the wall was what seemed to be a built in closet. He approached it and opened it.

“Wow.....”

Many suits and shirts were hanging inside. When Kyosuke turned over and looked at the tag attached to the chest, he saw it was an expensive brand and inadvertently exclaimed in surprise. It seemed that being a yakuza could get one plenty of money. On the shelf were nicely displayed wristwatches that even Kyosuke knew the brand names of. After he admired them for some time, Kyosuke thought he shouldn't be doing this right now and began to search for something he could use as a weapon. If he found a gun it would be a miracle, but no matter how many drawers he opened, he found nothing.

No knife or even scissors? Kyosuke thought, rummaging through the drawers, and the moment he let out a sigh, he heard the sound of the door open behind him and spun around.

“What the hell are you doing?”

A thug opened the front door and entered the room.

“U- um.....”

Crap! Kyosuke regretted that he hadn't been paying attention to what was happening behind him, but although the thug was glaring at him, he didn't question him any further.

“Hey, sit down on the bed!” He said and stared at him, perhaps trying to keep an eye on Kyosuke's every move.

“O- okay.....”

He was holding a large tray with a sandwich and a silver pot with what seemed to be filled with either coffee or black tea. When Kyosuke sat down on the bed like he was told, the thug approached the bed and put the tray down beside him.

“I'll come again by the time you finish eating.”

The thug uttered that and was about to leave.

“U- um.....”

Just then, Kyosuke guessed that it didn't seem like there was any need to worry that he was going to hurt him, so he came up with a way of attaining a weapon from him and tried to see if it would work.

“What?” The thug asked back, sounding annoyed.

“I- I want to eat an apple or a peach. I'll peel the skin off myself, so.....”

“Of course you will,” What are you whining for? The thug exclaimed, appalled and left the room. He waited for five minutes, hoping for him to return.

“Here.”

The thug returned, carrying the thing Kyosuke waited for.

“Thank you.” He thanked him and accepted the fruit knife and peach.

“Don’t cause any trouble.” The thug spit out and left the room.

“.....Alright.....”

He didn’t expect things to progress so easily. Clenching the fruit knife, Kyosuke inadvertently muttered that. Naturally, Kyosuke had no experience in stabbing a person. There was no knowing whether or not this slender knife could take a person’s life. But if he cut an artery, maybe it would be possible. The thug just now had said he would come to collect the plates by the time Kyosuke was finished eating and would probably collect the knife as well.

I can’t let that happen, Kyosuke thought, moved the peach and the knife to the side table and began to think about how he could use the knife to his advantage. It seemed that Kanou didn’t remember him and had really brought him here to make him his ‘woman’. If ‘woman’ meant the same thing as ‘lover’, Kanou would probably invite him to bed. When he undresses and tries to embrace him that would surely be an opportunity to cut an artery. As a tactic, this was perfect, but Kyosuke let out a deep sigh as he looked at the sandwich in front of him and thought that Kanou’s weak spot was probably the neck.

How did a man ‘have sex’ with another man, anyway? Kyosuke had no idea. Surely it would be on the bed. They would both have to be naked, and he didn’t need to know what would happen after that. Perhaps he should hide the knife under the pillow? But if he did that, it would be unnatural to place the fruit by the headboard. But wait, first of all, he didn’t even know if Kanou would come to this room before the fruit knife was taken away from him. Kyosuke thought this as he turned his eyes towards the door. That’s why there was no other choice but to call Kanou before he was finished eating.

But how should he do it? No matter how much he thought, he couldn’t come up with an answer. First, he needed to get something into his stomach and then he would think. Deciding that, Kyosuke picked up the sandwich and took a bite. Although he was hungry, swallowing was hard, and he ate up the sandwich with much difficulty. After that, he took the empty plate towards the door, placed it down in front of it and tried to open it again just to check. But just like before, the door did not open, and Kyosuke

realized that he was locked in.

What for? He thought but could not come up with an answer.

Time is just passing by without me doing anything, Kyosuke thought. He knocked on the door and loudly called out to try to reach the thug from before who was probably outside.

“Excuse me! Excuse me! Where is the boss right now?”

It seemed that Kanou had told the driver that he wasn’t going to go out anywhere anymore today. Assuming that, he was probably in that room right now, so Kyosuke thought he should try calling for him. He had to strike while the iron was hot. There was no guarantee that Kanou did not remember him. He had to carry out his mission at once. If he could do that, he could die with no regrets. Kyosuke continued to knock on the door, shouting.

“Shut uuup.”

Not even thirty seconds had passed before the thug appeared and glared at Kyosuke.

“Um, the boss, where is he right now.....?”

“What, you miss him? Seriously, did the boss become a man who fools around or something.....” Although the thug said this, looking clearly displeased, he answered Kyosuke’s question. “He has just finished eating now. I’ll call him for you.”

“P- please do.....” Kyosuke’s heart pounded. His throat became dry.

“Good grief....” The thug muttered as he took the empty tray and closed the door. Kyosuke ran back to the bed and grabbed the fruit knife. He thought about where to hide it, but couldn’t come up with anything, so he held it behind his back. When Kanou entered, he would wait until he was very near and then he would hold the knife up high and cut his artery. He didn’t know if this would be possible. If he failed, he would instantly die. But even if he died, he would have no regrets. Kyosuke thought that. He had lived just for revenge. If the person on whom he sought revenge killed him, it would definitely be regrettable. If he failed this time, there would be no second chance. Because he knew this, he wanted to use this chance. If he missed this chance, he would just be awaiting his death. But it wasn’t like a pitch-black darkness was waiting for him in death. His beloved brother, whom he wanted to see again, was waiting for him. He didn’t feel afraid. He would kill Kanou if he could, and he wanted to make that be a gift for his older brother. That’s why there was no way he could miss this opportunity. Kyosuke nervously waited for the door to open again. Twenty seconds or thirty seconds feels like an

extremely long time for someone who's waiting.

Just a little bit longer.

Just a little bit longer, and I will get my revenge.

So please wait, Big brother.

His heart was pounding, his hand clutching the fruit knife was sweating. He most likely only had this one chance. How could he just let it go? Perhaps because he was nervous, he kept swallowing as he waited for Kanou to appear. The door opened before Kyosuke's eyes. Kyosuke's nervousness increased and he started to feel sick, but he swallowed again and adjusted his grip on the knife. The moment he saw Kanou appear on the other side of the open door, Kyosuke nodded to himself and thought, 'This is it.'

He prayed that the thug from before was not behind Kanou. It seemed that Kyosuke's wish had reached heaven, because Kanou entered the room alone.

Thank you, God. Kyosuke thanked heaven and clenched the knife again.

"What?" Kanou asked Kyosuke, not even trying to hide his bad mood. "What do you want?" Kanou asked sullenly.

"U- um.....to talk....."

"Talk?" Kanou frowned looking suspicious and took one step towards Kyosuke.

Three more steps. When he approached him, he would get the knife. Kanou stopped in front of Kyosuke, who swallowed and adjusted his grip on the knife.

"What do you want to talk about?"

"Well, that's....."

If Kanou wasn't going to approach him, he would just have to approach him himself. Adjusting his grip on the knife, Kyosuke rushed up to Kanou.

"Hey!?" Kanou exclaimed, sensing that the atmosphere was not normal.

*"DIE!?"*

There was not turning back now. Precisely because of that, he could not fail. Clutching the knife, Kyosuke threw himself at Kanou. He would cut the artery. Thinking that, he plunged it into Kanou. The tip of the knife danced through the air. This startled him and he tried to strike again, but Kanou grabbed his wrist.

"Let go!" He desperately shook his wrist, trying to free himself, but the grip was too strong, and the knife fell to the floor with a clatter.

It's all over. As Kyosuke prepared himself, he heard Kanou's droning voice in his ear.

"Don't rush to your death. I'm sure your brother wouldn't want that."

“.....You.....!”

The moment he heard that, something snapped in Kyosuke.

“So you knew about everything, huh!? *How!?*”

If that was the case, not only did Kanou’s behavior towards him up until now not make any sense, but his pride was also extremely hurt. Just the thought that he had been found out and laughed at made him feel so humiliated that he felt he could die of rage. That’s why Kyosuke yelled, but Kanou yelled at him in return.

“*Don’t* make me say it again! I’m sure your brother wouldn’t want you to die.”

“Shut up! I don’t want *you* to tell me how my big brother would feel!”

Hearing Kyosuke scream this, Kanou clicked his tongue and only said, “Then be quiet,” and released Kyosuke’s arm.

“.....!”

As Kyosuke staggered from the force, Kanou leaned towards him.

“Sto-,” before Kyosuke could finish saying that, Kanou gagged him with the necktie he was wearing.

“Mmphff!”

Kyosuke continued to yell anyway, but Kanou pushed him down on the bed and bound his wrists behind his back with Kyosuke’s very own belt. As he tried to twist and turn his body, Kyosuke heard Kanou’s cold voice.

“Behave yourself, if you don’t want to die.”

“Mmphff!”

*I’ll kill you!* He tried to scream, but the gag in his mouth prevented him from doing that. Kanou left Kyosuke tied up on top of the bed, picked up the fruit knife from the floor and left the room.

“Boss, what was that noise just now?”

He could faintly hear the thug, who must have been waiting outside, ask. Then the door opened and Kanou as well as the thug became visible to Kyosuke.

“I’ll train him this way. Don’t interfere.” Kanou said with a cool tone of voice, and the thug beside him looked at Kyosuke, startled.

“Mmphff!”

Train me for what? Kyosuke tried to shout, but the door soon closed, and the two vanished from his field of sight.

How can I get free? Kyosuke thought, struggling, but the knot behind him on his wrists was too tight and didn’t show a sign of coming undone. Pretty soon he got tired

and let out a sigh. He had rarely left the hospital, so he got really tired just from moving around more than usual.

I have to wait to regain my strength and then think of a way to escape somehow, Kyosuke thought, closing his eyes, and Kanou's detestable face flashed in his mind.

*"Behave yourself. If you don't want to die."*

He didn't fear death. He was living just to avenge his older brother. If he could carry out that goal, he could then die.

Even though he had gotten this long-awaited opportunity, he.....

Kyosuke tried to bite his lip, but the gag prevented him from doing that. As regret filled his chest, Kyosuke moved his body into a more comfortable position and let out a deep sigh again. He would probably never again get a golden opportunity like the one he just had. If that was the case, then he didn't care if he died already. In fact, he might as well die in front of Kanou. Negative thoughts that had previously filled his head were disappearing. Ideally, he would kill Kanou and die there on the spot as well. If they could stab each other, he could die with no regrets, but in his current situation it seemed that stabbing each other would be difficult. But even if he died in front of Kanou, Kanou would just laugh at him, and that would be the end of that. So because Kyosuke realized that, he decided he would choose his own death, rather than get killed. However, he still could not read Kanou's intentions. When Kyosuke calmed down, he began to think why Kanou let him live. Kanou had found out his true identity, but there was no sign of him letting the others in the group know about that 'true identity'. In fact, it seemed he was trying to hide it.

Why?

Not a single answer or even a possibility as to why that might be the case came to Kyosuke's head. After brooding over it for some time and realizing that he couldn't find the answer, Kyosuke gave up, not caring anymore and stopped thinking about it. As long as he didn't get his revenge on Kanou, he was as good as dead.

He had been exactly in this kind of state before he had found out that Kanou had killed his older brother. Kyosuke thought back to his former self. In this world there had existed only one person he was blood-related to, one person who had loved him – his older brother. His older brother had also been the one and only person whom he valued. Now that his older brother was dead, there was not a single thing to live for in this world anymore. He wanted to go to the same place his older brother was. Kyosuke didn't believe in the afterlife, but even if he couldn't see his older brother in the place of the

dead, he couldn't see him right now when he was alive either, so it didn't make a difference whether he lived or died. To Kyosuke, a world without his older brother was a world that was not worth living in, and even if he died right this very moment, he would not have a single regret. However, right now, he did regret that he hadn't avenged his older brother, but it wasn't his fault that he hadn't accomplished it. Nevertheless, he would make sure that he would not abandon hope until the very last moment.

As he told himself that, Kanou's face flashed into Kyosuke's mind again, and perhaps because he was tied up, the urge to fight he had just a while ago did not burn in his chest anymore.

\* \* \* \*

How much time had passed? Before he knew it, Kyosuke had nodded off since he was so tired, but sensing that the door had opened, he opened his eyes with a start and looked around him. When Kyosuke looked towards the now closed door, he saw Kanou looking at him with a tray in his hands.

"Dinner," Kanou said, approaching Kyosuke. On the tray was a sandwich similar to the one from before and a vegetable-juice box. Not only did he not feel in the slightest bit hungry, Kyosuke had abandoned the meaning of eating as well as the intent to live. That's why he looked away from Kanou, but Kanou didn't pay any attention to him and approached the bed. After he placed the tray on the side table, he got on the bed.

"Get up," he grabbed his upper arm, forced him to sit up, and removed the gag. When Kyosuke tried to lie back down, he grabbed his arm again, and made him sit up. Then Kanou picked up half of the sandwich and pushed it against Kyosuke's mouth.

"Eat."

"....."

I don't need that.

When he stubbornly kept his mouth closed, Kanou pinched Kyosuke's nose with his other hand forcing the suffocating Kyosuke to open his mouth.

".....Urgh.....!"

He shoved the sandwich immediately into Kyosuke's mouth and covered his mouth with the palm of his hand. Like this, there was nothing to do but swallow. As soon as he swallowed, he pressed the sandwich to his mouth again.

"Cut it out!"

At the same time Kyosuke shouted, Kanou shoved the sandwich in again. When he started coughing, because he had choked, Kanou held out the vegetable juice with the straw stuck in it.

Stop that, Kyosuke thought and snapped, crying out, “I don’t need it! I don’t want to eat out of your hands!”

“Then I’ll go get someone else,” Kanou said in a droning voice, got up, and tried to leave the room.

“Let anyone come, I still won’t eat! I’m going to die right in front of you!!”

Kanou stopped and looked back at Kyosuke.

“Don’t throw your life away,” he said that in a barely audible voice, enraging Kyosuke.

“You.....! Didn’t you throw my brother’s life away!?”

“.....” Kanou stared at Kyosuke.

“I’m going to die! I’ll take my life right in front of you! I’ve lived until this day just to kill you!”

There was no meaning to live now that all desire was gone. The very moment he decided that he was going to die, he came up with a way to die. It was a method he had acquired from a book, but he remembered that one could die by biting off one’s tongue. Actually, he didn’t know if he would be able to do it or not, but he would try.

Just as Kyosuke tried to bite off his own tongue, Kanou rushed back at him and pushed him down on the bed.

“Let go!”

As Kyosuke struggled, Kanou held him down and gagged him.

“Mmphff!”

With the cloth in the way, his teeth couldn’t reach his tongue.

“So you can die right in front of your brother’s enemy?” Kanou coldly asked as he stared down at Kyosuke, who let out muffled cries.

“Mmphff!”

He couldn’t die. But if there was no hope in accomplishing his revenge, then there was no meaning in being alive. Kyosuke was unable to say it, but that was how he felt as he glared up at Kanou. Five seconds, ten seconds. Time passed by as they continuing to glare at each other.

“Alright, fine,” Kanou was the one who broke the silence. A dirty smile appeared on his face, and he grabbed the front of Kyosuke’s shirt and tried to make him sit up.

“If you want to die so badly, I’ll let you experience humiliation that will *definitely* make you want to die.”

“.....?”

He didn’t understand what that meant, but being pulled up by his clothes and having the collar of his shirt tighten around his throat made it more difficult to breathe. Even if he wanted to cough, he couldn’t because of the gag.

What the hell was about to happen? While Kyosuke puzzled over this, that very next moment he was thrown down on the bed. The impact took his breath away.

“Mmphff!”

Before he knew it, Kanou was on top of him. Straddling him, Kanou reached out and ripped open Kyosuke’s shirt. Nothing was making sense. Kyosuke knew only one thing – that Kanou was trying to harm him, but as to what kind of ‘harm’ it was, he wasn’t sure. Kyosuke was in a daze, but when Kanou grabbed Kyosuke’s jeans and pulled them down along with his underwear, Kanou’s intentions became clear.

*“Make him my woman”* – so he had brought him here for this reason from the start, Kyosuke realized. Because his hands were tied behind his back, his shirt was not completely removed from his body, but the lower half of his body was completely exposed. He could feel Kanou’s piercing gaze on him, and unable to stand that, he tried to hide his privates by twisting his body. However, Kanou instantly lifted up both of Kyosuke’s legs, split them wide open, and looked down at his face.

“Mmphff!”

Under the bright light of the lamp, Kyosuke screamed silently with shame of having his genitals exposed and continued to struggle trying to find a way to escape. But Kanou completely paid no attention to that and raised Kyosuke’s waist even higher, tightly grabbing the back of his thighs. Kyosuke’s arms hurt from having his body weight press down on them. But what hurt more than anything else was the humiliating pose he was being forced to do.

*“Humiliation that will definitely make you want to die”* – so this was it, huh? Even though there was no way to escape, at the very least he would not be submissive. Thinking that, Kyosuke glared straight at Kanou.

“Not flustered, are you?” Kanou loomed over him, laughing.

“Mmphff!”

He felt more and more pain from this unnatural position and Kanou’s body weight. After Kanou looked at Kyosuke, who was groaning with pain, in a ridiculing

way, he let go of Kyosuke's legs and let his hand slide up Kyosuke's chest.

"Mmphff!"

At the same time he rubbed the palm of his hand over one of Kyosuke's nipples, he took the other nipple in his mouth and began to stimulate both nipples with his fingers and tongue. A chill went up Kyosuke's spine and he felt sick.

Stop it.

He tried to twist his body, but he was being firmly pressed down and couldn't move an inch.

".....!"

As Kanou did this disgusting thing to him, he felt a different feeling rise inside him. Before he knew it, his nipples had become erect, but besides that he felt a shiver creep up from his loins when Kanou pinched his sensitive area and lightly bit the other side. Kyosuke knew it was no longer a chill because his penis was becoming hard. His heartbeat increased and he even felt what seemed like his blood was flowing to his lower regions.

What was happening to his body? Kyosuke was starting to panic now. Kyosuke was a virgin and had never even masturbated before either, so he was quite inexperienced in sex. He had never touched another's body and never got touched either. But now, not only had a person of the same sex as him undressed him, that person was licking and playing with his naked nipples as well. This kind of situation was abnormal and 'unbelievable' to him. On top of that, he was getting hard while his nipples were being assaulted. Kyosuke just could not accept this. Each time he felt the rough tongue and the fingers that continued to touch his nipples that were slowly growing red, his body trembled and his cock grew hotter and hotter. After he stopped feeling flustered, mortification flooded Kyosuke's chest. He was being pinned down and licked by the man he hated and it was turning him on.

What disgrace! He thought as his eyes welled up with tears, and at that moment, Kanou moved his hand away from his nipple and grabbed his erect cock making Kyosuke scream silently as he rage seized him once more.

He desperately tried to escape from Kanou's grasp.

"What the hell are you doing?" Smirking, Kanou rubbed the narrow part on the tip of Kyosuke's cock with his thumb and index finger.

"Mmphff!"



Semen dripped profusely and Kyosuke felt like he was going to come at any moment. When he flexed his inner thigh muscles to try to fight the feeling Kanou laughed at him and stroked his cock.

“.....!”

Unable to fight this strong stimulus, Kyosuke came immediately and spilled a milky white fluid into Kanou’s hand.

“.....”

His breathing had increased and he wanted to deeply inhale some air, but the gag prevented that so he couldn’t breathe very well. As his consciousness was starting to fade and his heartbeat echoed inside his head like a bell, Kyosuke suddenly came back to his senses when he heard Kanou’s voice come down on him from above, not even trying to hide the fact that he was mocking him.

“How does it feel being forced to come by the hand of a man you hate?”

“.....!”

Before he knew it, Kanou got off the bed and looked down at Kyosuke’s naked body. The moment Kyosuke realized that he was looking at the semen on his thighs and on his limp cock, blood rushed to his head. When he tried to shout at him, the gag once again prevented him from doing that, so he couldn’t speak. He glared at Kanou with mortification, and Kanou smiled, evidently making fun of him, reached out and untied the knot on the necktie which served as a gag.

“If you want to curse at me, go ahead.” I hope you’re utterly mortified, Kanou laughed, then quickly looked away from Kyosuke and headed for the door.

“I’ll kill myself! I’m really gonna kill myself!!”

He had not planned on living after going through such humiliation. Like Kanou had said, *‘being forced to come by the hand of a man you hate’* made Kyosuke lose his mind. At this moment, he felt so desperate that he did not care if he threw away his life. He tried to bite off his tongue again, but Kanou returned to him in several long strides and sharply slapped his cheek.

“Ow!” Kyosuke cried out from pain, but Kanou pinched Kyosuke’s cheek between his thumb and middle finger and forced him to look his way.

Then he said threateningly, “If you’re mortified, then live. If you want to die in vain, I won’t stop you.” Understand? Kanou glared at Kyosuke, who tried to escape from his grasp by desperately trying to shake his head from side to side, but Kanou’s grasp did

not loosen. “I couldn’t care less if you die on me. I’m not so sensitive as to be affected by the death of an insect.”

“.....!”

He was mortified. He felt tears well up in his eyes, not from pain but from mortification.

How can I cry? Kyosuke thought, biting his lip and glaring at Kanou, who sneered at him and violently let go of Kyosuke’s cheek. Kyosuke’s eyes dimmed with tears as Kanou turned his back on him and walked to the door.

He hated him. He despised him. Not only had he killed his beloved older brother, but he also made Kyosuke put up with this abuse. Kanou opened the door and tried to disappear out of the room.

At the very least, I will vent out my anger! Kyosuke thought and just before the door closed, Kyosuke screamed at the top of his voice, “*Kanou!* Someday I’m going to kill you! I’ll *definitely*...I’ll definitely kill you!”

“What did you say?!”

Just then, a different angry voice not belonging to Kanou, came booming from the other side of the door and the door swung open with a loud bang. The thug from before, who had brought Kyosuke food, rushed in all red in the face.

“*Why you*.....what he hell did you say to the boss!?”

“Let it go, Akira,” Kanou appeared, entering the room behind the thug, who was trying to head towards the bed and grabbed his shoulder.

“Boss!”

Looking dissatisfied, the thug turned back to look at Kanou and after Kanou cast a glance at Kyosuke, he returned his gaze back to the thug called Akira.

“I’ll be the one to train him. Don’t interfere.”

“But.....but I can’t stand that this brat insults you, boss!” Akira said, his face bright red, looking really worried about Kanou and glared hatefully at Kyosuke.

“He’s my woman. I’m going to train him from now on. He looks like he’s worth training.”

“But still! It seems risky when he says things like ‘I’ll kill you’! Let me teach this guy to fear you, boss!”

It felt like Akira, who was glaring at Kyosuke with a gleam in his eyes, would seriously hurt Kyosuke. Not only were his hands tied behind his back, he was also practically naked, so there was no way he could run away even if he tried. So was there

nothing he could do but meekly accept being violently punched and kicked? As Kyosuke tightly shut his eyes from fear, preparing himself for the worst, he heard Kanou sigh, “Akira, don’t make me say it again. I’ll be the one to train him.”

“But.....but let me at least make sure he doesn’t talk so big to you, aniki.....!”

“You’re so persistent, Akira.”

Here, Kyosuke wondered what the hell was happening, so he slowly opened his eyes, but directly met Kanou’s gaze. To see Kanou smirking at him made his blood rush to his head again.

“Kanou!”

“Bastard! Don’t address the boss with such familiarity!”

It seemed that Akira was getting more and more enraged. He shook off Kanou’s hand and rushed over to the bed.

*“Let it go.”*

Akira raised his hand, about to hit Kyosuke, but Kanou rushed over too and grabbed his wrist, stopping him.

“Boss, why did you stop me!?” Akira lashed out at Kanou but Kanou looked like he was fed up with all of this. He then turned to Akira and smirked.

“Look. This is how I’ll train him,” he said grabbing Kyosuke’s ankle and sharply yanked the cowering Kyosuke towards himself from the bed.

“What the!?”

Without even having time to resist, Kanou pulled him over, grabbed both of his thighs and forcefully lifted his waist up.

“Uh- boss...!” Akira exclaimed in confusion. Kyosuke also felt bewildered, but the shame of having his genitals be exposed under the bright light of the lamp overcame him and unable to stand it he screamed, “Let go!” and began to struggle, trying to somehow escape Kanou’s grasp.

“He’s worth training, don’t you think?”

As he held Kyosuke down, Kanou smiled at Akira, who was standing stock still beside him in shock, and then let go of one of Kyosuke’s thighs and suddenly inserted his finger into Kyosuke.

“.....!”

From this strange pain, Kyosuke forgot to scream and just swallowed. After the sharp pain passed, the feeling of a large foreign object seized him, and he began to shake with disgust. Until now, no one had ever touched him down there and now a stranger’s

finger was inside him.

It's disgusting! He tried to scream, but because Kanou moved his finger violently, he held his breath again.

"....."

When he looked up, Kanou's face was expressionless. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see Akira still looking bewildered.

"Watch." Kanou looked back at Akira as he said just this, and then removed his finger from Kyosuke.

"Urgh.....!"

Even when he took it out, Kyosuke felt pain, but eventually the feeling of the foreign object faded and he let out a relieved sigh. However, his relief immediately disappeared when he heard the next sound. The clinking sound of a fastener being undone echoed inside the room.

No way, he thought as a surprising sight unfolded before him. Kanou took his own cock out of his unfastened slacks and began to rub that erect thing up and down through his hand.

"Wo- woah....."

He heard Akira swallow. He was looking straight at Kanou's cock. Kyosuke was also intently and inadvertently gazing at Kanou's fully erect, thick with shining black hair cock, but came back to his senses when he realized that Kanou was looking at him.

This wasn't the time to be amazed. This was the time to escape. He thought and began to struggle, but it was too late. Kanou grabbed both of Kyosuke's legs and raised them up.

"Let go!"

His fear became reality. Kanou pressed his erect cock to Kyosuke's asshole right in front of Akira, who stood watching.

"Stop-!" Unable to stand it, Kyosuke screamed from disgust of having this hot mass push up against him. But the next moment, the tip of the cock forced its way inside and this time, he screamed loudly from the unfamiliar pain. Although it hurt with just the finger, the pain of having the thick cock go inside the tight opening and forcefully pry his body open was by far greater.

"It hurts! Stop! Stop it!"

Tears welled up in his eyes from the agony. The pain of having his body split in two increased, and because it was being thrust inside by force, the skin around his

opening ripped and the stinging feeling came.

“.....!”

As Kyosuke writhed from the pain, Kanou readjusted his grip on his legs and then quickly thrust his hips in further, causing Kyosuke’s anguish to increase more and more.

“It- it went in.....”

Kyosuke heard Akira breathe out. It felt like a thick wedge was being hammered deep into his body and it hurt very much. But immediately after that, Kyosuke felt even more physical pain. He heard Kanou sigh and inadvertently, looked up at his face.

“.....”

When their eyes met, Kanou smirked and suddenly began to move his hips.

“.....!”

Kyosuke let out a silent scream from how intensely this made him ache. His behind hurt and burnt like it was on fire. New drops of blood seeped out from where they were joined together, dripping down onto the white sheets.

“.....Ugh.....!.....Ugh.....!”

Each time the cock thrust in so deep inside him that it made his intestines rise up, he was seized with nausea, and yet Kanou persisted to violently torment Kyosuke’s body with his thrusts so much that he wasn’t even giving him a chance to vomit. As tears of pain fell from his eyes, above him he could see Kanou continue to calmly thrust in and out without even the color changing on his face. Finally his speed increased and then he stooped moving as he loomed over Kyosuke, who was falling into so much misery, that he couldn’t even breathe. At the same time he had stopped moving, Kyosuke felt a warm, heavy gush of fluid fill him after which Kanou violently let go of Kyosuke’s legs and threw down his body.

“.....Urgh.....!”

As Kanou slid out his cock, the cum he had injected inside Kyosuke also dripped out. This time, he really felt like he was going to vomit from this extremely disgusting feeling, but even if he wanted to cover his mouth, he couldn’t because his hands were tied behind his back. Kyosuke swallowed, holding back the nausea and heard Kanou’s indifferent voice in his ear.

“You see, he won’t be throwing any insults anymore. I’ll train him this way. Understand?”

“I- I understand.....”

The one Kanou had spoken to was Akira. It seemed that Akira had never seen two

men have sex before, so he still had a stunned expression on his face as Kanou said to him: “If you understand, then get the hell out.”

“Y- yes.”

Kanou pointed to the door with his chin, and Akira dashed out of the room as fast as he could. But Kyosuke couldn’t afford to see this sight as he tried to hold down his nausea with all his might. Suddenly, Kanou seized his shoulder and made him look up at him with a start.

“Hate me all you want, but the one who’s at fault here is your weak self,” with the usual smirk, Kanou said just this. Sheer anger left Kyosuke unable to speak, but Kanou he threw him back down on the bed and left the room, laughing loudly.

“D- damn it.....!”

His nausea completely left him now, and instead the insuppressible anger filled his chest.

I’ll kill him – a strong flame of hatred ignited within Kyosuke. He would never forgive him no matter what! He would definitely kill him. He would get free somehow and stick a knife into Kanou’s heart. He was no longer in despair and without a will to live. He felt the same as when Kanou had first appeared before him and confessed to him that he killed his older brother. No, his desire for revenge was now stronger than before. Now, the inside of Kyosuke’s chest was burning furiously like hell fire.

## 「Chapter 5」

When it became night, Kanou's henchman named Akira brought him dinner. He said with an extremely reluctant expression on his face, "The boss asked me to this," and pressed the sandwich against Kyosuke's mouth, trying to force him to eat.

"Fucking whore."

He knew he should eat in order to gain strength, but being verbally abused by Akira made Kyosuke clamp his lips together out of anger and refuse to eat out of his hands.

"Do whatever the hell you want then," Akira swore and left. After that, the door of this room did not open again. It seemed that Kyosuke had been brought to Kanou's bedroom, but even after dawn, Kanou still had not returned. He couldn't straighten out his messed up clothes since his hands were tied behind his back, but that wasn't the only thing, he also could not move freely as he would like to because his body had been wounded from being fucked against his will. Because Kanou violated him, Kyosuke had spent one night lying in bed in this terrible state. Several hours later it became light outside and the door opened without even a knock. A man he didn't expect to see peeked inside.

"Hey, you okay?" Kouta, who had said that he would make Kyosuke his subordinate, entered the room. He acted completely different from how he had acted yesterday. He nervously approached the bed and slightly bowed his head.

"A- aniki?"

Surprise overcame the feelings of shame at having Kouta see him naked. Putting up with the pain from his wounds, he tried to sit up but Kouta stretched out his hand to help him up and also covered Kyosuke's lower half of the body with a towel. He had a painful expression on his face.

"Th- thank you."

Kyosuke looked up at him as he thanked him, not understanding why he was here, but Kouta appeared embarrassed and immediately averted his eyes away from Kyosuke. Then he began to speak in barely a whisper.

"The authorities ordered that you...I mean, that you – Kaoru-san – is to be placed under my care."

"What?" Kyosuke was so surprised to hear that he inserted the 'san' to his name that he inadvertently cried out.

“And because you...I mean, you – Kaoru-san – are aniki’s ‘woman’, I was told I cannot speak impolitely to you.”

He felt uncomfortable that Kouta used the word ‘impolite’, but perhaps the person who had ordered him to do that had used that word.

“Um, who did...”

Could it have been Kanou himself who had ordered Kouta to do this? Kyosuke thought, but he had guessed wrong.

“It was Iwatsuki-san. The boss’s assistant.”

“.....Iwatsuki-san said that.....?”

Why had he ordered a thing like this? Kyosuke pondered.

“That’s why,” Kouta began to speak very reluctantly and Kyosuke came back to his senses upon hearing his voice. “Allow me to take care of you.”

“Thank you for that, aniki.”

This was the most uncomfortable thing ever. On top of that, Kyosuke worried that having Kouta meddle in like this decreased his chances of running away.

Rather than taking care of him, perhaps Kouta was serving as a guard? It suddenly hit him. That must be what Iwatsuki had intended. He had seen on the Internet – on a gossip article, so to speak – that the Okawa’s wakagashira, Kanou, and the wakagashira’s assistant, Iwatsuki, were aspiring to reverse their positions without any rivalry going on between them, even though in public Iwatsuki always obeyed Kanou. It seemed that Iwatsuki was older in terms of age. According to that gossip article, Iwatsuki had been the first to join the Okawa but accepted that the Okawa wakagashira be his boss.

Perhaps Iwatsuki had sent Kouta because he was suspicious that there was some hidden meaning behind Kanou making Kyosuke his ‘woman’? Kyosuke thought about this, but frankly even if there was a ‘hidden’ meaning behind it, Kyosuke himself did not understand what it could be.

“I’m doing all of this because aniki Kanou told me he was counting on me. If there’s anything you need, just tell me...erm, I mean...let me know...please. First, we have to wash you up, then...um...we have to take care of your wounds.....”

“Ah, um...aniki. Could you please stop speaking so formally?” Feeling that there was some a sort of a menace in the way Kouta was acting towards him, Kyosuke timidly asked him this. It somewhat resembled sarcastic flattery. Kyosuke probably wouldn’t be treated badly because the senior members had ordered Kouta to take care of him, but since right now Kouta’s position had fallen from what it had originally been before,

Kouta seemed extremely dissatisfied about that. When you have someone bearing ill-will towards you, problems are sure to follow. However, it wouldn't make a difference even if Kyosuke were to tattle-tell on Kouta, that's why Kyosuke acted humble, hoping to put him in a good mood.

“ ‘Cause to me, you're my aniki no matter what.”

“Seriously, though. Why'd you become the boss's lover?”

Perhaps Kyosuke's method of being humble worked, because finally, Kouta returned to talking like himself again. Kouta pouted and scowled at him, but there was no ill-will in his eyes.

“...I don't know.....Is the boss gay?” Kyosuke asked Kouta, lowering his voice. He wanted to know any information about Kanou.

“No way. As far as I know, he never seemed interested in men. But he also doesn't like women. What's the word for that? .....Oh, oh yeah. He's too stoic. He's popular with women, but he's the type of guy that goes for doing good at his job than having many lovers, ya know?” That's another cool thing about him, Kouta said, openly praising Kanou, but then he looked shocked. “Tha- that is his character.”

“Seriously, aniki, you don't need to speak formally. Please speak like we always did when we were together.”

“But...!” Kouta pouted again when Kyosuke pleaded.

“The boss is gonna get mad at me and at Iwatsuki-san!”

“If it's just us in here, no one is gonna find out, right?” Do you think I'm going to tell on you? Kyosuke wanted to ask, but it seemed that Kouta understood what Kyosuke meant.

“Alright then, if you say so.”

He was a little reluctant about it, but it seemed that Kouta's mood had very much improved now and he suddenly became more talkative.

“So that's how it is then. First I'm gonna take you to the bath, then I'm gonna fix you up. I heard you tried to make a run for it? I was told not to let go of your hand, so.....come on, a'ight?” Let's go, Kouta said, then grabbed Kyosuke's arm and tried to lift him up of the bed.

“Thank you.”

He expressed his gratitude and stood up with Kouta's help. Kouta held on to his arm as Kyosuke left the room and headed towards the bathroom.

“I'm gonna untie you for a sec. You're not gonna run for it, right?”

There was already hot water in the bath. After Kouta said that, he freed Kyosuke's arms – that were bound by the belt – so that Kyosuke could take off his shirt. For a split second, a thought of slipping past Kouta and making a run for it popped into Kyosuke's head, but not only was Kouta no match for him when it came to physical strength, even if he tried to run for it, there was no way he could go outside completely naked like this, so he dismissed that thought. He had no choice but to wait and see how the situation played out. Because of that, Kyosuke did not stop Kouta from binding his hands again. After he was immersed into the bath, Kouta washed his body.

“I wonder...” Kouta's face became expressionless seeing Kyosuke wince when the soap stung his wounds and quietly asked this. “This sure looks pretty bad, but I wonder if aniki really did have sex with you.”

“.....”

Kyosuke disagreed with the expression “have sex”. What happened to him was simply rape. However, Kouta would probably not listen to him or agree with him if Kyosuke told him that, so he kept his mouth shut. It was already too late for Kyosuke to feel humiliated from it, but he couldn't help it anyway. As Kyosuke was about to bite his lip, he heard Kouta clear his throat.

“I bet aniki got turned on ‘cause you look like a girl.”

“.....”

As Kyosuke hung his head, not knowing how to respond, he saw Kouta's lower half of the body. He was wearing only his underwear. It startled him to see that the front of his boxers was bulging, but he looked away, thinking that it was better to pretend he didn't notice it. After Kouta washed Kyosuke's body and hair, he offered to treat the wounds around Kyosuke's buttocks, but Kyosuke refused out of shame. It seemed that Kouta was not too keen on doing it either, muttering that he was going to get scolded because of that, so he complied with Kyosuke's request and undid the bindings on his arms to let him put on a sweat suit. Then he bound his hands again.

“I'm sorry. Could you tie my arms in front of me?”

Not only was it a little painful to maintain a body position with his hands tied behind his back, it also made it difficult to do things like sit up. It would be much more comfortable to have his hands tied in front of him, and also, he could probably manage to untie the bindings with his mouth.

When he nervously suggested this, Kouta replied: “Can't be helped then,” and complied with Kyosuke's request again by tying Kyosuke's wrists in front of him. “Let's

go back to the room.”

He then grabbed Kyosuke by the wrist once more, and they were about to leave the bathroom when suddenly the bathroom door violently swung open. A man stepped inside.

“I- Iwatsuki-san!”

Kyosuke was surprised but not as much as Kouta. Iwatsuki ignored Kouta – who was wide-eyed and wondering why Iwatsuki was here – and reached towards Kyosuke as if he was stealing him away from Kouta.

“The Ogawa kumichou<sup>9</sup> requests you.”

“Ku-kumichou?”

His upper arm was seized with force, and he got dragged away. He heard Kouta’s voice behind him, but that voice was immediately tapered down.

“I- Iwatsuki-san, what does the kumichou want?”

“He said he wants to see the boss’s stubborn new lover’s face. He wants him to be presented to him immediately,” and you don’t need to come, Iwatsuki said to Kouta over his shoulder and without waiting for a reply, he turned to Kyosuke, glared at him and said, “Hurry up.”

“U- um.....”

I don’t understand why – these words consumed him, but all thoughts of trying to disobey disappeared under Iwatsuki’s intense glare.

“I- Iwatsuki-san, aniki Kanou knows about this, right?” Kouta’s voice shook as he asked nervously.

“The leader has also requested him,” Iwatsuki gave a curt reply and pulled Kyosuke by the arm as he began to walk again.

“T- take care.”

They left the room as Kouta called out behind them in a soft voice, and Kyosuke continued down the hall behind Iwatsuki, who walked briskly. He was seized with pain with every step he took, but more than the pain in his body, Kyosuke was overcome by the murky feeling in his heart. He could only foresee bad things.

As they walked, he recalled the information he had obtained about the Okawa kumichou – Okawa Kazunari – the man who had developed the Okawa to be a great organization in all of Kanto, no, in all of Japan. In terms of being tyrannical, this organization exceeds even the most wicked legends of the world, and it was said that

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<sup>9</sup> Kumichou: Family head; the leader of the yakuza group.

what made this organization thrive was how cruelly they treated people. People were nothing to them.

Since the ancient times, the yakuza organization has valued chivalry. Now days they encourage building relationships between people and the community, however, it seemed that the Okawa had not inherited that ‘chivalry’ mindset, and there were even news stories that claimed the title of ‘mafia’ suited them more than the ‘Japanese yakuza’ title. Prestigious yakuza did not deal drugs. It was common knowledge in this world that those who lay their hands on such things are to be looked on with contempt for their unorthodox ways, but the Okawa not only shamelessly sold drugs they also established a grand exchange of drug sales with the Chinese and Korean mafias, and due to that gained enormous profits. Overtime, the Okawa obtained such great power that they made connections with foreign mafia and made enormous capital. A hit man, who spoke very little Japanese, killed people who defied the Okawa.

Kyosuke was terribly nervous about meeting the Okawa since they were depicted to be so heinous that it was frightening just to hear about them. What was the reason for this sudden summoning? His terror increased, because he just couldn’t even imagine what it could be about. An urge to run for it welled up inside him, but even if he were to run, it was clear that he would be caught. He was pushed into the elevator and when they arrived in the underground parking garage, he was pushed into the backseat of a shiny black car.

“Drive,” Iwatsuki ordered the chauffeur, and then glared at Kyosuke.

“.....!”

But rather than a glare, his gaze seemed more like he was deeply interested in him. Gathering up his courage, Kyosuke attempted to ask Iwatsuki a question.

“Um.....What matter does the kumichou needs to do?”

At that moment, Kyosuke gasped at the intensely severe look Iwatsuki gave him.

“You have no guts, do you?” Seeing Kyosuke scared, seemed to have improved Iwatsuki’s mood, and he chuckled, slightly nudging Kyosuke on the head. “I’m the one who wants to know that. What does the leader want to meet *you* for anyway? Because you’re the boss’s first lover?”

“.....”

Iwatsuki seemed truly curious. Even though Kyosuke guessed that perhaps he didn’t know the reason either, he still couldn’t just let the subject slide.

“I don’t understand.” He puzzled over it.

“Boss is not the type to do just anything on a whim.....However, I think the only reason for him to do this *is* because it was on a whim,” as Iwatsuki muttered, he stared hard at Kyosuke, as if searching for the answer.

“.....I’m getting nervous.” He couldn’t help but be nervous at meeting the kumichou and from having Iwatsuki stare at him. Kyosuke’s voice shook when he muttered this. He also began to shiver because he had just taken a bath not too long ago.

“There’s nothing wrong with being nervous. Even I get nervous when I’m in front of the kumichou,” Iwatsuki said and nudged Kyosuke on the head again. Kyosuke was about to grimace with pain from how strongly Iwatsuki had nudged him, since it felt like being hit, but he controlled himself and instead forced a smile, thinking that it would be troublesome if Iwatsuki didn’t like his reaction.

“Thank you.”

“He knows nothing about you, so I bet he’s just curious. I bet the leader just got interested when he heard that the boss got a male lover,” Iwatsuki laughed heartily, but then suddenly got a serious look on his face and peered into Kyosuke’s eyes.

“This was your first time meeting the boss, right?”

“Ah... yes.”

A chill ran up his spine. Iwatsuki’s eyes had a sharp gleam in them as if he was trying to look past the lie, but Kyosuke tried to prove that he wasn’t lying by staring straight back into his eyes.

“So does that mean the boss fell in love with you at first sight in the office? Hmm...but it was rather unexpected for him to come by the office, too. He must have heard a rumor that Kouta got himself a beautiful boy as an underling or something.....”

Kyosuke trembled as he gazed at Iwatsuki, who was visibly frowning, making wrinkles appear in the middle of his eyebrows.

“Why is the boss so interested in you in the first place?”

“I- I don’t know. I.....”

He couldn’t answer anything else besides that. Shaking his head from side to side, Kyosuke desperately thought of an answer that was similar to what Iwatsuki had given before.

“Maybe because aniki Kouta got an underling?”

“I guess. He kind of cares deeply about Kouta, so it’s not like he won’t be interested in anything Kouta does.”

It seemed that he was still not convinced about this being the reason for Kanou’s

interest in Kyosuke, but Iwatsuki nodded and looked away from him. Kyosuke bit his lip and controlled himself from letting out a sigh of relief, because he knew that Iwatsuki would get suspicious and start questioning him again.

“At any rate, we’ll find out when we meet with the leader,” Iwatsuki said, as if telling himself ‘no need to fret’ and looked away from Kyosuke, directing his gaze out the car window beside him.

“.....”

That sure will happen, Kyosuke thought as he sat there, unwilling to accept this bad premonition that was welling up in his chest. He didn’t expect that the kumichou would want to meet him, and he now felt guilty that he had given a false name. In addition to that, Kanou already knew who he really was. So could it be that he, Kyosuke, was being investigated because of this? If that were the case, then wouldn’t he be under investigation from the moment Kanou realized who he was? Kyosuke couldn’t think of any other reason for being summoned by the Okawa kumichou besides that. But what would happen if the kumichou found out who he really was? Kyosuke’s stomach was in knots but all he could do now was wait to meet the kumichou and not think about what could happen. Nonetheless, he didn’t believe that the disaster he thought he was prepared for was actually awaiting him.

\* \* \* \*

In about an hour, the car arrived at the upscale residential district, Shoto, in Shibuya and stopped in front of a tremendous mansion. The trip had taken a while, since Iwatsuki had thought it rude to bring Kyosuke looking so roughed up to visit the kumichou, so he had brought Kyosuke to the office and made him change his clothes there.

When the car had stopped, the driver rushed out to the intercom, which was affixed on the gate, and as soon as that driver returned to the car, the automatic gate opened. The car then slowly proceeded inside.

Wondering just how large this residential district was, Kyosuke stared out the car window at the vast grounds. He couldn’t even imagine how much it cost per square meter of this ground. It was a villa that looked just like a high-class Japanese style hotel. In front of the entrance, there was even a rotary and five thugs were standing there, ready to greet the car. As soon as the car stopped, those thugs rushed up to all doors and opened

them all at the same time.

“Thank you.”

Iwatsuki called out to them and when he was just about to get out of the car he turned around towards Kyosuke and said, “Hurry up and get out.”

“Ye- Yes!”

It seemed that he was calm, but an air of tension hung on Iwatsuki’s face. When Kyosuke thought that perhaps he would now finally come face to face with the said-to-be atrocious leader of the Okawa, nervousness again welled up in him. He followed Iwatsuki and entered inside. Once he was inside the mansion, he saw that there was a great deal of thugs waiting in here, too, and they bowed to Iwatsuki. As Kyosuke was thinking that it was surprising that there were so many members of this organization in this house, all standing by and waiting for orders, Iwatsuki asked one of the thugs: “Where’s the leader?”

“He’s been waiting since not too long ago,” this way, the thug said, leading the way as he proceeded down the hall. Iwatsuki made a signal with his eyes telling Kyosuke to come along, and Kyosuke nodded and followed after him. When they reached the room at the end of this long hallway, the thug stopped, sat down in front of the Japanese sliding door in a respectful manner, and called into the room.

“Iwatsuki is here.”

“Come in.”

A voice rang from behind the door. Kyosuke held his breath, flinching from just the sound of this voice, and Iwatsuki slowly opened the Japanese sliding door.

“Thank you.”

God knows how many tatami mats were in the large room inside which the kumichou of the Okawa greeted Iwatsuki and Kyosuke as he sat in the finest seat. He had seen the Okawa leader’s photograph before via the Internet, but actually seeing him in person made Kyosuke tremble from the sheer power of his presence. His throat became dry, and he couldn’t even make a sound. That’s how intimidating the Okawa kumichou in front of him was. The Okawa leader would be turning sixty this year, but he looked like he was in his fifties; actually, he had maintained his appearance youthful to make himself seem like he was could even be in his forties. His eyes were sharp like a hawk’s, and just a glance from him could make anyone give way, no matter how strong a man they were.

Kyosuke had read about his reputation via the Internet and just as he had read, he felt himself ‘give way.’

“Hey,” Iwatsuki, who seemed to have noticed Kyosuke’s state, grabbed Kyosuke’s arm and dragged him towards the Okawa kumichou.

“.....”

He couldn’t even muster the words to thank him. Kyosuke collapsed, sitting down on the tatami mat floor and trembling, looked at Iwatsuki.

“.....It can’t be helped,” Iwatsuki muttered, looking at Kyosuke, and then bowed to the Okawa leader in the most polite way.

“Leader, as you had ordered, I brought Mihara Kaoru.”

“Thank you,” The Okawa kumichou nodded, smiling at Iwatsuki, and then turned his gaze towards Kyosuke.

“Mihara Kaoru, huh?”

There was a smile on the Okawa leader’s face, but his eyes were not smiling in the least. Those expressionless eyes that reminded him of the darkness of an abyss made Kyosuke tremble far more than being glared at would. His trembling lips couldn’t even produce a quivering sound. Rather, he couldn’t even make a slight move. All Kyosuke could do was just gaze at the Okawa leader, trembling.

“You look like him,” the Okawa kumichou’s eyes narrowed slightly.

“.....!”

The Okawa kumichou smiled at Kyosuke, who stiffened in place like a frog hypnotized by a snake.

“What was his last name, now.....? Ah, you happen to know the name Syoichi? Written with the characters representing the number one and eye?”

“.....!”

Trembling with fear, Kyosuke almost inadvertently let out a sound the moment his older brother’s name ‘Syoichi’ came up.

“You know him, don’t you?” The Okawa asked with so much emotion on his face that it seemed like he was purposefully exaggerating it.

“I- I don’t know.....!” Kyosuke shouted immediately. He thought it was on instinct.

“You don’t know?” The Okawa kumichou’s eyes narrowed again, but this time, Kyosuke wasn’t at a loss of words out of fear; he nodded firmly.

“Yes, I don’t know.”

It wasn’t that he didn’t feel afraid, because right now he could clearly sense that his life was in danger; he didn’t quite understand the reason, but the moment the leader

had said that he knew his older brother Syoichi, a firm belief that he was going to be killed right here in this place sprouted up in Kyosuke's chest. And he didn't want to die. He still hadn't had his revenge! Besides, now he wanted to know the answer to why the leader of the Okawa had asked about his older brother. Perhaps his older brother had indeed been involved with the yakuza, as he had suspected. Until he made sure that was truly the case, he was not going to die, Kyosuke thought this as he looked straight back at the Okawa kumichou.

"I see. So you don't know, huh?" The Okawa kumichou chuckled but his eyes were saying, 'don't lie.'

"Um, leader....." Iwatsuki timidly called out to the kumichou, because it seemed that he sensed what the leader was trying to get at and he thought that he had to do something.

"Iwatsuki, do you remember, two years ago we had a pet we cared for? Ah, Miyama was his name. Miyama Syoichi....."

"Miyama Syoichi.....Ah!" Iwatsuki cried out, appearing to have remembered and peered at Kyosuke's face. "He looks like him.....yes, he looked like him, I guess....." Iwatsuki gazed at Kyosuke with a piercing look, and the leader continued talking cheerfully.

"He was a beautiful boy. I suppose I stole him away from that place where he worked as a bartender at Yasuda's shop. You couldn't tell whether he was a man or a woman, but he had a nice body. I miss him," a leering smile rose on the Okawa leader's face as he narrowed his eyes, surely reminiscing on the subject.

"....."

What was the Okawa kumichou implying? Kyosuke was confused. However, the next thing the Okawa kumichou said made him clearly understand how his older brother had been involved with the yakuza – with the Okawa leader.

"I used him for his body. His body was perfect for such things. At first, I was intrigued by the look on his face as he put up with the pain, but pretty soon dicks became his favorite. If he likes to suck dick, then he'd like it up the ass too, I thought. He clung to me before he lowered my pants and eagerly licked me all over. His lovely buttocks trembled as if saying, 'I want you to hurry up and fuck me'."

"....."

That's a lie! – Kyosuke desperately controlled himself from shouting this out. The Okawa leader was lying. By degrading his brother, the Okawa leader was waiting for him

to become enraged. If this were to happen then that would be proof for him that Kyosuke was related to Syoichi as his younger brother. Telling himself this over and over, Kyosuke suppressed the urge to want to cover his ears; to shut out the vile words of the Okawa kumichou.

“He liked being tied up, too, and he was fond of being beaten with a belt. He was probably a masochist. Oh, that’s right, that time when I shaved off all of his pubic hair he got hard as well. Well, that delighted me. At first, for some time, he hated everything and fought back, but when I gave him money, he did anything I wanted him to. I was delighted. Aside from the dirty things he did only for money, he was a perfect lover.”

Money – the moment Kyosuke heard that word, he almost let out a cry. He recalled memories from the past. There was a time when he had accidentally walked in on his older brother when his older brother had been preparing to enter the bath and was removing his clothes, but then his older brother looked so shaken that he had rushed into the bathroom even before he completely took off all of his clothes. Ever since then, his older brother became careful changing in front of him. When Kyosuke had asked him what was wrong, being surprised to see that there were scars on his older brother’s body, his brother had laughed with a nervous twitch on his face and told him that he fell.

Kyosuke stared at the Okawa leader, dumbfounded. Could it be? Could it really be true what the Okawa leader had said about his older brother? The Okawa leader also stared back at Kyosuke, a complacent smile on his face.

“At any rate, you look like him. Come to think of it, Iwatsuki, didn’t Syoichi have a little brother?”

“If I remember correctly, yes……” Iwatsuki nodded, glaring at Kyosuke with a sharp look in his eyes. They got me, Kyosuke thought, bracing himself, but right at that moment his patience snapped when he heard what the Okawa leader said next.

“His little brother wanted to be a doctor, so he needed the money……I feel like I heard that story before. What kind of a doctor did his little brother want to be to make his brother suck a yakuza’s cock? Poor little guy.”

“*Argh-!*” Kyosuke charged at the Okawa kumichou, screaming. He didn’t even have a weapon or anything, but he couldn’t help but want to punch him.

“*Hey!?*” However, Iwatsuki, who was beside him, immediately pinioned him and held him back from behind.



“Let me go!”

As Kyosuke struggled, the Okawa leader spitefully asked him:

“What’s wrong? I thought you didn’t know any man by the name of Syoichi?”

The Okawa leader grinned at Kyosuke, who almost screamed, “Syoichi is my big brother!” However, right at that moment, he heard a swooshing sound of the Japanese sliding door being violently opened as one man gallantly entered the room.

“I’m late, leader. It seems my woman did something dumb and careless,” I’m deeply sorry, Kanou said as he approached the Okawa kumichou, sat on his knees in front of him and bowed to the floor. After that, he looked at Kyosuke who was being restrained by Iwatsuki.

“What are you doing? You need to bow too.”

“Wh- .....!” Why do I need to bow!? Kyosuke yelled out, enraged, but heard the Okawa leader’s voice gently flow into his ears.

“Kanou, you knew he was Syoichi’s little brother?”

“.....!” Kyosuke gasped.

“No,” Kanou’s reply echoed within the room, overlapping Kyosuke’s gasp.

“Boss,” Iwatsuki raised his voice in warning to Kanou, who glanced at him and said:

“Let go. He’s my woman. I’ll deal with him.”

“I thought it was unusual for you to get yourself a ‘woman’, but.....”

But Kanou cut off the Okawa kumichou midway.

“I’m truly sorry, leader. I’ll make sure to warn him not to cause any trouble again.”

“.....”

The Okawa leader shut his mouth and glared at Kyosuke and then at Kanou.

“Then you’re saying he’s not Syoichi’s little brother?” The Okawa leader asked in a whisper, but it was so powerful that it made Kyosuke tremble despite himself.

“That is correct, he’s not,” Kanou bowed, replying listlessly, not at all afraid of how sharp the Okawa leader’s voice sounded.

“.....I see.....” For a moment, the Okawa kumichou was about to say something else but in the end that was all.

“Excuse me,” Kanou bowed deeply, then got up and looked at Kyosuke. “Let’s go.” He stretched his arm towards him as he approached Kyosuke and clutched him by the arm. Kyosuke had been shaking, but the moment he felt Kanou’s hand on him, he

stopped at once.

“.....O- ok.....”

Kanou was glaring at him severely, but for some reason Kyosuke felt relief in his heart when he looked at those eyes. As Kanou dragged Kyosuke away from the Okawa kumichou, he heard the Okawa's bold voice behind him.

“I understand now. So those are your intentions, Kanou?”

Hearing that, Kanou stopped and turned around to look back at the Okawa leader. Kyosuke also turned around to look at the Okawa leader.

“I don't have any intentions,” Kanou answered listlessly again, but Kyosuke felt like a nervous look appeared on Kanou's face that hadn't been there before.

“I know you have a loyal heart,” the Okawa leader grinned and waved his right hand telling them to go.

“Excuse me.”

After Kanou bowed, more politely than he had done so before, he gave Kyosuke, who was just looking at him dumbfounded, an order in a lowered voice.

“What are you doing?” You have to bow too, he ordered him, and Kyosuke bowed unwillingly again. After that, Kanou grabbed Kyosuke by the arm once more and dragged him out, but as soon as he closed the Japanese sliding door behind him, Kyosuke thought he heard a suppressed sigh escape Kanou's mouth.

“Honestly! You're such a pain.”

It seemed like he noticed that Kyosuke had been inadvertently staring at him. He clicked his tongue and glared at Kyosuke.

“Come.”

That's all he said and then proceeded down the hall, taking long strides.

“U- um.....” Kyosuke called out to him from behind, but naturally Kanou, who was quickly heading towards the entrance, was ignoring him. There was a mountain of things he wanted to ask. The place where Kanou had told him to ‘come’ was probably Kanou's own place. Kyosuke decided he would pester him with question as soon as they arrived there. As confused as he still was, Kyosuke let Kanou pull him out of the building and into the car that was parked outside. The car began to move without waiting for Kanou's orders as soon they both got inside, but Kanou leaned forward from the backseat and told the chauffeur to take them to a different address

“Don't go to my place, go to the S Hotel.”

“Ye- yes, sir.”

The thug driver replied. He seemed confused and looked at the backseat through the rear-view mirror. Having a bad feeling about the fact that they were heading to a hotel and not Kanou's place like he had firmly believed they were going to go, Kyosuke could not hold back his urge to want to ask his questions right now. He tried to start a conversation with Kanou many times, but Kanou looked out the window beside him as he sat in the moving car. No matter how many times Kyosuke cast glances at Kanou, he never turned around to look at him.

## 「Chapter 6」

The car stopped at the entranceway of a high class, foreign hotel – which Kyosuke never could have set a foot into before – next to Tokyo station. When they got out of the car, Kanou told the chauffer that he could go back and grabbed Kyosuke's arm, dragging him inside the hotel.

“Welcome!” The bellboys politely greeted Kanou at the entranceway. Kanou completely ignored them and headed towards the elevator that lead to the floor where the front desk was; not even asking to be guided there.

“Welcome!” When they got off the elevator, the person working at the front desk greeted them and after deeply bowing to Kanou, he respectfully handed him the card key.

“.....” Kanou silently took the key and dragged Kyosuke by the arm towards the elevator that was used to get to the guest rooms. The person working at the front desk said, “Excuse me” and ran past them. He arrived in front of the elevator before them and pressed the call button. Soon, the elevator door opened and Kanou and Kyosuke went inside.

Kanou pressed the button that lead to the top-most floor and the elevator ascended. They were alone in the compartment, so Kyosuke gathered up the courage and began to speak: “Umm... do you know my brother?”

“.....”

Although Kanou cast a quick glance at Kyosuke, he looked away just as quickly without a word. The elevator door opened when it arrived at the highest floor. Kanou silently pulled Kyosuke by the arm as he began to walk down the hall. As Kanou proceeded down the hall with familiarity, he suddenly stopped, held out the card key in front of a guest room door and unlocked the door. The room was a suite. Kanou lead Kyosuke straight into the bedroom and threw him on the bed.

“.....Ungh!” Kyosuke suddenly remembered when Kanou had played with him on a bed, so he inadvertently braced himself. However, Kanou left the room without even so much as a glance at Kyosuke.

“Umm...!”

He quickly got up off the bed and tried to chase after Kanou, but the door shut right in front of him. He opened the door and called out to Kanou, who had his back to him, but in the end, Kyosuke couldn't muster the courage to go on after him. He slowly returned to the bed and collapsed down on it. As Kyosuke closed his eyes, the Okawa

leader's crude words rang in his ears.

*"His little brother wanted to be a doctor, so he needed the money.....I feel like I heard that story before."*

*"He liked being tied up, too. And he was fond of being beaten with a belt."*

*".....That's a lie....."*

If he didn't say that out loud, he feared that what the Okawa kumichou had said about his brother would become true. Kyosuke was afraid of that, so he negated the Okawa leader's words out loud. However, the more he denied these words, the more he began to think deeply about what he had discovered. His brother had quit the university, keeping it a secret from him. He also found out that the place his brother said he worked at had been a complete lie according to the police investigation. He recalled the memories of that day when his older brother told him that he had found work.

*"You don't have to worry anymore."*

His brother's tired but smiling face flashed before him.

*"Kyosuke, you want to be a doctor. It takes a lot of money to become a doctor, so that's why you gave up, didn't you? But it's okay now. You don't need to worry about the school expenses or even the living expenses. From now on, we can live comfortably."*

His brother had seemed so happy. Kyosuke had praised him, saying he was glad that his brother had found a good job.

*"Thank you."*

His brother's smile didn't look like it was hiding anything as far as he could recall, but as he now discovered, that wasn't the case! Tears began to spill out of Kyosuke's tightly shut eyes. As if *that* was a good job! Becoming a yakuza's *lover*! Having his body spread wide open and doing whatever the Okawa kumichou had told him to. No matter how absurd it had been his brother had put up with it all by himself in order to make Kyosuke a doctor, in order for them to have a decent life, and in order to have money. The Okawa kumichou had made fun of his brother for putting up with this pain by calling him a 'masochist', but it didn't seem like his brother had that kind of a fetish. His brother had just simply put up with it. Kyosuke guessed that his brother had done it all for him.

*"I'm sorry.....! .....I'm sorry, big brother.....!"* Kyosuke sobbed loudly. He was miserable that he hadn't known anything. He couldn't forgive himself for having lived each day so care-freely.

*"Big brother, you've been coming home drunk a lot lately."*

He had pouted at one time, because he had been lonely.

*“Sorry about that. I can’t turn them down when they invite me to go out.”*

His brother had forced a smile, but most likely the one who had been responsible for him coming home late and drunk had been the Okawa kumichou forcing him to do these things.

*“What kind of job is this, going out to drink. Salarymen sure have it easy.”*

Even though Kyosuke had scorned him, his brother had just laughed and said ‘Sorry’. At one time, when he had stepped into the bathroom where his older brother had been taking off his clothes in preparation for a bath, his brother had quickly dodged him by jumping into the bath. His brother had always tried to avoid having Kyosuke look at his body, because surely there were scars that the Okawa kumichou had left there for fun. He was sorry for everything. He wasn’t able to do anything at that time.

“Big brother.....! .....I’m so, so sorry.....!”

His tears did not stop, and breathing became difficult with each sob. Coughing violently and tortured by guilt, Kyosuke continued to cry loudly.

\* \* \* \*

Over half an hour had passed until his tears finally stopped. His head hurt from crying so much. Thinking he should wash his tear-stained face, Kyosuke got up from the bed and headed towards the bathroom.

“.....Urgh.....”

The moment he saw himself in the mirror, tears welled up in his eyes again, because he thought about how his brother had sacrificed himself so that he, Kyosuke, could live like this. He turned on the tap and washed away the tears welling up in his eyes with the strong flow of water. The cold water calmed Kyosuke’s emotions. He dried his face with a towel and looked at himself in the mirror again when suddenly, doubt crossed his mind, which signaled that he was coming to his senses. Kanou knew that Kyosuke was Syoichi’s little brother, and yet, why had he insisted that the Okawa kumichou was ‘wrong’.

“.....”

He frowned at himself in the mirror. As he looked at his pale face, Kyosuke began to think again about Kanou’s intentions. If his true identity had been revealed at that time, what kind of wait would have been waiting for him? The moment it became known that

he had lied and sneaked into the organization, he would probably be punished in some way. So then, could he have escaped from such a fate for now—? Kyosuke tilted his head in the mirror. What was the reason that Kanou was hiding Kyosuke's identity from the Okawa kumichou? As Kyosuke thought and thought, one possibility came to mind. Kanou had said that he was the one who had killed Syoichi, but perhaps the Okawa kumichou didn't know that? Then Kanou probably thought that it would be unwise to have the Okawa leader learn about this, so he had insisted that Kyosuke was someone else, right?

“.....It's possible.....but.....”

The wakagashira killing the kumichou's lover – that is a form of treason against the kumichou but perhaps there had been another reason for it. This was a mystery, but it was clear that Kanou did not want the Okawa leader to know Kyosuke's identity.

However, when he recalled the atmosphere at that mansion, a feeling that something was definitely out of place welled up inside Kyosuke's heart. He had felt obvious malice from the Okawa kumichou when he had met him at the mansion where the Okawa kumichou had probably just wanted to confirm Kyosuke's true identity. Since he had abused Kyosuke's older brother, whom he claimed to be his 'lover', it didn't seem like he had any feelings towards his brother judging by his attitude, tone of voice, and by what he had said. One could've said that perhaps he made him his 'lover' out of love, but by the way the Okawa kumichou had talked about his brother, it seemed that he had only used his brother for sexual release. Now the younger brother of his dead lover had used an alias and had snuck into the organization, so perhaps the Okawa kumichou thought that Kyosuke was out to seek revenge and that's why it was understandable that he had suddenly summoned him today to meet him face-to-face. So then, if the Okawa kumichou thought that Kyosuke was out to get him, it meant that it was because the Okawa kumichou *himself* had ordered to kill his older brother, didn't it?

“.....Ah.....”

If that was it, then it meant that Kanou was protecting him, didn't it? But why was Kanou protecting him? Kanou despised him. Kyosuke had received injuries – sexual injuries from him just recently.

“.....I don't understand.....”

Right now Kyosuke was completely confused. As he stood troubled in front of the sink mirror, he heard the Okawa leader's and Kanou's words revive in his head.

*“Aside from the dirty things he did only for money, he was a perfect lover.”*

*“How does it feel being forced to come by the hand of a man you hate?”*

He didn't get it. It seemed that from what they had said, they were both trying to hurt him. Right at that moment, when Kyosuke was evermore confused, the door of the bathroom suddenly opened, and he looked up, startled.

“Ah!”

“Kyosuke-kun! I found you!”

The reason Kyosuke cried out in astonishment was because he was surprised to see a familiar face reflected in the sink mirror.

“Sahashi-san.....”

He quickly spun around and looked at the physical form of the person in front of him. Sahashi was not an illusion. He rushed over to Kyosuke and instantly grabbed his arm.

“Why did you leave the hospital?”

“Ah, um.....” Kyosuke could only think that this must be a dream. He was so surprised by Sahashi's sudden appearance that he couldn't give a sufficient answer.

“Well, I'll hear about that later, right now, let's get out of here,” Sahashi tried to drag the dazed Kyosuke by the arm out of the bathroom, but almost by reflex, Kyosuke kept his footing and tried to shake off Sahashi's hand.

“What are you doing? It's dangerous here. We need to get out of this place at once,” Sahashi pulled Kyosuke by the arm with more force.

“Sa- Sahashi-san, why are you here?”

He didn't get it. This current situation alarmed Kyosuke.

“I'll explain the details in the car. Come now,” Sahashi was beginning to sound impatient and tried to start walking while dragging Kyosuke by the arm.

“But.....”

Of course Kyosuke knew that Sahashi belonged to the police and of course he also acknowledged that Sahashi had taken care of him beyond words, nevertheless, he couldn't help but hesitate. Just when he was about to again ask Sahashi the reason why he had shown up here, he heard a shrill voice of a young man.

“Who the hell are you, and how the hell did you get in here!?”

“Ah.....!”

It was Kouta that appeared before them. It seemed that he had come to check up on how Kyosuke was doing, perhaps because Kanou had told him to. Sahashi quickly reacted. While Kouta stood there yelling, he quickly and silently ran up to him.

“Bastard!”

Upon dodging Kouta’s fist, Sahashi hit Kouta right in the stomach.

“Urgh!”

Kouta toppled over, and Sahashi violently hit him on the back of the neck. Kouta fell to the floor and it seemed lost consciousness.

“Come on! Quickly!”

Sahashi turned around to look at Kyosuke, but Kyosuke was already running out the door.

“Kyosuke-kun!”

Kyosuke felt Sahashi chase after him as he desperately continued to run. He passed through the next room and then went out of the hotel room. As he tried to run towards the elevator, he heard Sahashi’s voice: “Kyosuke-kun, wait!”

He caught me – the moment he thought that, the door of the employee entrance, which was a few feet up ahead along the wall of the hall, opened and a maid came out.

“.....!”

Beyond this door Kyosuke saw that the employee elevator door opened as well. Feeling bad about it, Kyosuke pushed the maid out of the way and headed towards the elevator door. He put his hand in-between the closing elevator doors, forced them open, and rushed inside.

“Kyosuke-kun!” Sahashi, who had already caught up to him by now, also tried to get on the elevator, but Kyosuke repeatedly hit the button marked ‘close’ and got the better of him. Before Sahashi could stick his hand in, the doors quickly closed and the elevator began to go down.

“Haa.....”

Alone in the elevator, Kyosuke let out a deep sigh as he leaned against the wall. It seemed that the employee elevator was one that could go from the topmost floor all the way down to the third floor of the parking garage without having to change elevators. The button leading to the first floor was already pushed, perhaps someone had already done so. He had ran for it without thinking because he had been so surprised at Sahashi’s sudden appearance, but now that he had calmed down and thought about it, he completely didn’t know the reason or the circumstances for why Sahashi had shown up here. However, it seemed that Sahashi did not intend to harm him. Surely, the hotel room that the yakuza Kanou had reserved was a ‘dangerous place’ like Sahashi had said. Perhaps he should have obeyed Sahashi? However, if he had done that, he would have lost his

chance to take revenge. But with the current circumstances, he had lost his chance to take revenge as well. Kyosuke thought this, sighing again just as the elevator arrived at the first floor. What should he do? Kyosuke thought, hesitated, then pushed the button to the topmost floor once more. He wanted to know why Sahashi was here, so he thought he should ask Sahashi directly. Kyosuke didn't know for sure, but he thought that maybe Sahashi had realized that the Okawa's wakagashira Kanou had killed his older brother. It suddenly occurred to him that maybe that's why Sahashi had shown up here in this place! He pushed the button 'close' to close the elevator door since it wasn't closing on its own, but right when the doors were finally beginning to shut, a hand reached in and grabbed the door.

“Wha-!?”

The arm clad in a suit jacket pried open the doors, and the person wearing the suit stepped inside. No matter how you looked at it, the tall man wearing black sunglasses did not look like a person working a decent job. Behind this man, who had forced the doors open, other men also dressed in suits and black sunglasses got on. Sensing danger, Kyosuke tried to weave his way past these men and get out of the elevator.

“Wait.”

The man grabbed Kyosuke's arm.

“Let go.....!”

As he struggled to shake off the hand, another man pressed a white handkerchief against Kyosuke's mouth.

“.....Mmph!”

The moment he breathed in, he quickly began to lose consciousness. Before Kyosuke realized that he had inhaled chloroform, he crumbled down on the spot, losing consciousness.

\* \* \* \*

“Urgh.....”

He had a splitting headache.

Groaning, Kyosuke opened his eyes and tried to stand up but to his shock discovered that he was seated in a chair with his hands tied behind his back. Flustered, he looked around him, yet he didn't recognize the place at all. It was a dimly lit space that seemed like a warehouse and the floor was made of unfinished concrete. This place was a

large, wooden container. Not only were his arms tied to the chair behind his back, both his left and right legs were also tied to the shabby wooden chair. He thought about what had happened to him as his dull headache persisted. He thought about how terribly surprised he had been to see Sahashi suddenly appear at the hotel room that Kanou had brought him to. He thought about how he had shaken off Sahashi's hand, got on the employee elevator, and then decided he should go back to Sahashi when a few men, who looked like yakuza, got on the elevator with him. He thought about how they had made him inhale chloroform and made him lose consciousness. As Kyosuke recalled the events in the order of how they happened, he heard a dull, metallic sound, and the warehouse door opened to allow several men inside.

“.....”

Iwatsuki was standing in the front with Kouta waiting behind him. When Kouta looked at Kyosuke, he seemed angry. Somehow, he looked like it hurt him to see this. He quickly averted his eyes.

“All awake, now?” Iwatsuki called out to Kyosuke, who continued to look at Kouta.

“.....Umm.....” Why am I being held captive? When Kyosuke was about to ask Iwatsuki this – who was looking at him, grinning – he understood the reason when Iwatsuki said next:

“Miyama Kyosuke.....Where did you get the name Mihara Kaoru? You are Kyosuke, Miyama Syoichi's little brother, aren't you?”

“.....”

His true identity had been revealed. Realizing that perhaps this was why he was being held captive, Kyosuke kept silent, hesitating whether he should admit it or feign ignorance.

“You look just like him. You sneaked into this organization to avenge your brother, didn't you?”

“.....”

The Okawa had indeed killed his brother, as he had thought. Maybe Kanou had been the one who had ordered it to happen, but the one who had ordered Kanou had probably been the Okawa leader. Perhaps Iwatsuki also had known about his brother's murder. I hate him, Kyosuke thought, glaring at him despite himself.

“What a beautiful brotherly love, but oh, so stupid. There's no way you can get to the kumichouu just by sneaking into the organization,” Ha ha ha – Iwatsuki laughed

loudly. As Kyosuke bit his lip, his hatred grew stronger towards Iwatsuki, and then he heard Kouta's timid voice.

"So it's true, huh? You're not Kaoru. You're Miyama Kyosuke?"

".....Ah....."

Although Kyosuke was angry, seeing Kouta's frantic expression filled Kyosuke's chest with guilt. He felt sorry for using and deceiving him, but Kouta's franticness didn't seem to be about that.

"It's a lie, isn't it? If it were true, aniki Kanou wouldn't have said the Okawa leader was 'wrong' about you. Well? The Okawa leader was wrong, right?"

"That's enough, Kouta," Iwatsuki spit out, violently hitting Kouta on the head.

"....."

That seemed make Kouta lower his head and shut his mouth for a moment, but almost immediately after, he raised his head, ran up to Kyosuke – who was watching him – and shook his shoulders.

"Say you're Kaoru! Come on! *Please!*" Tears welled up in Kouta's eyes. Dumbfounded, Kyosuke wondered why he was being so frantic. As Iwatsuki gave out a fed-up sigh, he approached them, grabbed Kouta by the back of his neck and violently pushed him down to the floor.

"Ow!" Kouta groaned, falling down on the hard, concrete floor.

"That's enough, Kouta. Face it. Whether you admit it or not, Kanou is still a traitor."

".....!"

Kanou is a traitor –? Kyosuke widened his eyes, wondering what that meant, as Kouta got on his hands and knees on the floor and loudly said: "That's a lie! I don't believe that aniki Kanou is the policemen's dog!"

"We have proof. You even saw it, didn't you? He's a dog. The policemen's dog," Iwatsuki spit out and lightly kicked Kouta's head with the tip of his shoe.

"Waah–!" Kouta fell face flat on the floor and began to cry loudly.

"Shut uuup. Hey!" Iwatsuki called out to a young thug who stood nearby.

"Take him away. He's too damn annoying!"

"Waah – ! Waah – !"

Two thugs raised the crying Kouta up on his feet and led him out of the warehouse. Iwatsuki, Kyosuke, and three more thugs remained in the warehouse.

The policemen's dog – Kyosuke did not understand the exact meaning of those

words that Iwatsuki and Kouta had said over and over again, but he kind of had an idea of what it could mean.

“.....He’s...the policemen’s spy.....?”

Those words inadvertently spilled out of Kyosuke’s mouth.

“What? You didn’t know either, huh?” You’re lying, Iwatsuki said, looking surprised by this, and Kyosuke came to his senses. “About three years ago, information frequently flowed to the police in exchange for profit. The kumichouu and even myself thought for sure that this was your brother’s doing, but who would’ve thought that the second in command of this organization was actually the spy for the police. I still can’t believe it.” Iwatsuki shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

I don’t even believe it, Kyosuke thought, dumbfounded, as he listened to Iwatsuki.

“It’s been five years. Five years since the wakagashira.... no, I mean, Kanou, joined the organization. Not even once did he give himself away during that time. I honestly still can’t believe this! He was quickly promoted to the wakagashira position, and we got ourselves a villain within the organization, but out of all things, who would’ve thought that the bastard was a police detective?”

Iwatsuki was just as surprised as Kyosuke was, no, perhaps he was even more surprised, because as he explained this, he looked deeply worried. Judging from that, it was probably true that Kanou was a police detective, but even if Kyosuke acknowledged that, there was a part that Kyosuke completely did not understand.

*“I ordered to have your brother killed.”*

After the explosion, Kanou had suddenly appeared at the hospital, threatened him by saying those words, and left. What could all of that had possibly meant? He completely didn’t understand the reason for Kanou deliberately making contact with him. Another thing he didn’t understand was that he just recently attacked him with hurtful words and raped him in order to humiliate him. All of that had been intentional. Why would a person who belonged to the police do such horrible things to him? He couldn’t think of a single possible reason for that. Additionally, he couldn’t help but be worried about what Iwatsuki had said not too long ago.

*“He was quickly promoted to the wakagashira position, and we got ourselves a villain within the organization, but out of all things, who would’ve thought that the bastard was a police detective?”*

He wondered what on earth had he done to be called a ‘villain’. Surely something

that was impossible for a policeman to do. Did those ‘corrupt’ things he had done include killing Kyosuke’s older brother? Maybe that’s why Kanou was trying to keep distance from him? He felt like that was possible, but if that was the case, then why had he declared to the kumichou that Kyosuke was ‘not Syoichi’s younger brother’? That part he did not understand.

“Hey, you listening?” Kyosuke heard Iwatsuki’s irritated voice and came back to his senses. At the same time as he realized that he had subconsciously entered the world of his own thoughts, he was slapped on the cheek.

“You’re the bait to get Kanou to come here. We’re gonna keep you alive until then, but when that bastard shows up, we’re gonna send the both of you to the afterlife. Relax as much as you want while you still can.” Perhaps satisfied after hitting him, Iwatsuki said that and this time nudged Kyosuke on the head before leaving him.

“Hey, stand on guard,” he called out to a thug, then walked over to a secluded area where a chair stood, sat down, and lit a cigarette. Just then, the two thugs who had taken Kouta outside not too long ago returned.

“Hey, where’re your guns?” When Iwatsuki called out to them, the two thugs ran up to him, took out their guns from their breast pockets and showed them to him.

“Where’s your backup?”

“They’ll arrive soon. Aniki Sakamoto and twenty more people,” the thug answered stiffly, but Iwatsuki kept asking him questions.

“Where’s Kanou?”

“He vanished from the hotel. He was being followed, but we lost him. However, he’s probably heading over here.”

“Find where he is immediately and make sure to supervise the area around this warehouse completely.”

“Yes, sir,” the thug replied loudly, and then dashed outside, perhaps to inform the others of the orders.

“I wish he’d hurry up and get here,” smoking his cigarette, Iwatsuki called out to Kyosuke who could only watch all of this happen around him.

“.....”

Kyosuke really didn’t think that Kanou was going to show up here. If he came, he will surely be killed. He didn’t think it was likely that there were people in this world who would choose their own death in such a way, out of their own accord. Besides, he definitely thought that Kanou wouldn’t come if it were Kyosuke who was being used as

bait.

When he remembered Kanou, only the severe look and contempt in his eyes came to mind, so Kyosuke thought he had somewhat of an idea what Kanou thought of him. Surely, even if you wanted to kill people whom you thought didn't matter much, taking care of your own life would come first. However, even if he told Iwatsuki this, he probably wouldn't hear of it, and even if he did listen to him, it would just speed up Kyosuke's own death. Kyosuke thought about all of this and sighed. No matter what he did, he was going to die. If Kanou didn't come, Kyosuke would be killed as a hostage that failed his purpose, and if Kanou came then they would both be killed. The probability of Kanou coming was one out of a thousand, Kyosuke laughed bitterly to himself, because he already gave up on the chances of him staying alive. Kyosuke regretted the fact that he was unable to get revenge on his brother, but he no longer knew who his real 'enemy' was. All this time he had thought his enemy was Kanou, so his goal had been to kill him. He had endured the painful rehabilitation center, clenching his teeth and trying to return his body back to how it was.

However, if it was the Okawa organization that killed his brother, then who should he kill? Kyosuke wondered. Perhaps the Okawa leader or someone who was instructed by the Okawa leader to do this? Even if that 'someone' was Kanou, he didn't feel as much hatred to him now as he had before. Even if he decided that his revenge should be aimed at the Okawa, there would be far too many enemies, not to mention it was impossible to stab the Okawa members being tied up the way he currently was.

If he died, he'd be able to see his older brother. When he thought that, he was no longer afraid of death. Accepting defeat, Kyosuke no longer cared whether Kanou was going to show up or not.

"He's late," Iwatsuki called out after some time had passed, sounding irritated. He got up off the chair and began walking over to Kyosuke again. "He's kinda late, isn't he!? That Kanou!" He violently kicked the chair that Kyosuke was sitting in. The chair fell and Kyosuke fell to the floor along with it. "Hey, you! Where's Kanou!? Answer me!"

Perhaps trying to rid of his pent up anger, Iwatsuki kicked Kyosuke with all his might.

".....!"

Kyosuke was seized by pain that felt like every bone in his body was breaking. Although he was already prepared for death, he suddenly thought about what it would be like to die like this. His brother had died from the explosion. It must have been hot and

painful. Pain from being kicked by a person was nothing compared to that.

“Urgh.....!”

Just as he thought that, Iwatsuki kicked him hard in the stomach with the tip of his shoe, and unable to stand the pain Kyosuke cried out in anguish, however right at that moment the warehouse door rattled open and a young thug dashed inside.

“Aniki! Kanou is here!”

“.....!”

Because of the pain, Kyosuke was already starting to lose consciousness, but the moment he heard those words he came back to his senses, thinking that was impossible!

“So he *finally* shows up, huh?” Iwatsuki said, giving Kyosuke a final kick in the stomach, and started to turn towards the thug...

“You bastard!”

Surprised that Iwatsuki’s face had changed color and that he angrily raised his voice, Kyosuke turned his head to look towards the warehouse entrance even though he was in pain.

“.....Ah.....”

Kanou was slowly walking towards Iwatsuki as he pressed a gun to a thug’s temple and used him as a shield. Kyosuke recalled that this thug’s name was Akira – the man who had been at Kanou’s place.

“A- Aniki.....” Akira looked like he was going to cry at any moment, but Kyosuke understood that this was because Iwatsuki was unhesitatingly pointing his gun at him as well. Does he intend to shoot the both of them? Kyosuke thought, inadvertently looking up at Iwatsuki.

“Quit it, Akira. Killing Kanou is more important than your life.”

“Anikiiii,” Akira wailed in despair.

As Kanou pinioned him, he finally said: “That’s harsh.”

“Shut the hell up, you policemen’s dog. How dare you deceive me all this time!” Iwatsuki yelled angrily and pushed off the gun safety.

“Anikiii.....!” Akira gave out another pathetic cry. Kanou clicked his tongue and shoved him to the side.

“Huh?!” The moment Kyosuke exclaimed his surprise that Kanou let him go, Iwatsuki fired his gun.

“.....!”

Without missing its target, the bullet pierced Kanou’s chest.



Or so it seemed.

For a moment, Kanou reeled, but then immediately regained his footing and pointed his gun at Iwatsuki.

“Bastard, you got a bulletproof jacket on, huh!?” Iwatsuki roared, and then looking like he realized something, looked down at Kyosuke who lay by his feet.

“Don’t,” he heard Kanou stop him the moment Iwatsuki looked down and pointed his ready to fire gun at Kyosuke.

“Then drop your gun or I’ll stick a hole in his head this time,” Iwatsuki laughed, and for a moment Kanou was about to say something, but unhesitatingly put his gun down on the floor.

“Why.....!” Kyosuke cried out despite himself. Hearing that, Kanou was about to say something again, but immediately closed his mouth and shook his head no.

“I’ll kill you!” Iwatsuki yelled, pointing his gun at Kanou’s head.

“Stop it – !” Before he knew it, Kyosuke yelled out again. His voice was so loud it was almost like a scream. As it echoed within the warehouse, a large amount of people suddenly bustled in through the open door, and their commanding voices echoed as they ran inside.

“Drop your guns! This is the police! We got you completely surrounded!”

A large crowd of the riot police carrying shields ran inside the warehouse, yelling. Kyosuke, as well as Iwatsuki and all the thugs in the warehouse, seemed to not fully grasp what was going on immediately, but being surrounded by the riot police, they knew there was nothing they could do.

“Are you alright?” The first man who spoke to him was Sahashi. He had a worried look on his face as he rushed up to Kyosuke.

“Why.....?”

Even now, Kyosuke still didn’t fully grasp the situation, but as he lay there, clutching his beat up stomach and being completely confused at this bizarre chain of events, he saw Kanou approach him.

“You’re late.”

“Don’t complain! It takes time to gather and send out the riot police.”

No matter how you looked at it, Sahashi and Kanou were talking right in front of him as if they were friends. Driven to extreme confusion, Kyosuke’s train of thought stopped working.

“Kyosuke-kun?”

“Are you alright?”

Kyosuke heard Sahashi’s and Kanou’s voices frantic with worry as he stopped thinking and feeling; losing consciousness right there on the spot.

## 「Chapter 7」

Kyosuke was in a hospital bed when he opened his eyes.

“Are you alright?”

The first thing Kyosuke saw was Sahashi’s worried face, and it took some time for him to realize what had happened to him.

“You got beat up pretty badly but it doesn’t look like any of your bones were broken. If you’re in pain, I’ll give you some painkillers right away, okay?”

There wasn’t anyone in the room besides Sahashi that was looking after him right now.

That’s right, the man I want isn’t here, Kyosuke thought as he sat up and looked around the room just to make sure.

“Kyosuke-kun?” Sahashi called out to him, questioningly, but Kyosuke questioned him instead.

“Um, where’s Kanou?”

“Kyosuke-kun, will you be alright sitting up like that?” Sahashi continued to ask worriedly.

“Is it true that Kanou works for the police? Is it true that he killed my brother?”

“Wa- wait a minute! I can answer your first question, but I don’t understand your second question. What do you mean?” Sahashi looked surprised as he peered at Kyosuke’s face.

“Did Kanou kill my brother?”

That was the first thing he wanted to know so that’s why Kyosuke asked that again, but Sahashi shook his head no, his eyes widening as if saying, ‘That’s absurd!’

“As you know, Kanou is a detective. A detective wouldn’t kill a person, would he?”

“But.....but, Kanou said that he did! He said he was the person who killed my big brother.....!”

He didn’t know what to believe. Kyosuke was in a daze but Sahashi grabbed him by the shoulders and stared into his eyes as he began to explain.

“I don’t know why you think that, but the Okawa killed your brother and Kanou had nothing to do with it. I can assure you that.”

“That’s.....but....but....”

He had heard it with his own ears. He wanted to tell him that but he couldn’t quite

put it into words. Because of that, Kyosuke hesitated, and Sahashi began to explain the situation slowly and carefully to make sure Kyosuke understood.

“In order to destroy the Okawa, Kanou sneaked into the organization five years ago while hiding the fact that he was a police officer. Kanou and I went to police school together, you see. I believed that Kanou would be the perfect man for this kind of job, so I nominated him. As I had thought, within the five years he was there, Kanou had gained the Okawa’s trust and got promoted to the number two position within the organization. With the information he had gathered, he had devised a plan to capture the Okawa leader.”

“.....Re- really.....?” But why was Sahashi using the past tense? Kyosuke’s ability to think wasn’t working too well, nevertheless, he tried to ask Sahashi why he was talking in the past tense, but Sahashi became silent all of a sudden and shook his head no as if something was wrong.

“Um.....” Why aren’t you saying anything? Kyosuke wanted to ask, but it seemed that Sahashi became aware of himself so he smiled and interrupted Kyosuke before he had a chance to ask.

“At any rate I’m glad, but first things first – you need to take it easy for now. We’ll talk some more when you get better,” see you later, then, Sahashi said with a smile as he was about to leave the hospital room.

“Please wait!”

Inadvertently, Kyosuke grabbed his arm and pleaded.

“Kyosuke-kun.”

Sahashi turned around to look at him, looking perplexed. Kyosuke didn’t mean to trouble him. In the past, Kyosuke probably would have thought that he was troubling Sahashi right now, but he couldn’t afford to be so considerate anymore.

“I understand the situation, but there’s still something I don’t understand – Kanou himself told me that he killed my big brother! .....If that was a lie all along, then *why* did he lie to me!? Can’t you at least tell me the reason for that?”

“.....Kyosuke-kun.....” Sahashi said Kyosuke’s name.

“Yes?” He replied immediately, and Sahashi gazed at him for a while, but finally let out a deep sigh and asked Kyosuke another question.

“When did Kanou tell you that?”

“What?”

Not expecting such a question, Kyosuke was taken aback for a moment, but then

immediately came back to his senses and answered.

“Right after the incident. Kanou suddenly appeared at the police hospital and told me not to investigate into what had happened to my big brother.....”

“I didn’t know that. Why did he do that?” Sahashi widened his eyes, seeming genuinely surprised but then looked like he realized something.

“Say, Kyosuke-kun,” as he called out to him, a dubious expression appeared on Sahashi’s face.

“Yes?” Kyosuke again replied immediately, and Sahashi continued to ask him more questions.

“Perhaps the reason why you suddenly worked so hard at the rehabilitation center was because it had something to do with Kanou coming to see you?”

“What?”

This question was not one that Kyosuke was expecting, so for a moment he was unsure how to answer.

“I thought it was strange. After your brother passed away and you received serious injuries, you seemed like you couldn’t go on living anymore. However, one day, the light in your eyes suddenly changed.....I see, so it was because of Kanou.....” Sahashi nodded as if he had understood something and kindly smiled at Kyosuke, who tilted his head, thinking, ‘I don’t get it.’

“Oh, that right. I’m sorry. Actually, after the incident, Kanou was always curious about you. He always asked me to tell him exactly how you were doing. Surely it was because of *that* that he decided he was going to play the bad guy.”

“.....What.....do you mean by that?”

None of this was making any sense to Kyosuke, of course. He felt like the answer was right in front of him, but he just couldn’t figure it out. Feeling irritated, Kyosuke leaned forward and peered into Sahashi’s eyes.

“Kanou heard from me that you had lost the will to live, so he tried to make you regain your will power by lying to you. He lied to you to make you think that he was your brother’s enemy..... He probably realized that no matter how much love and sympathy you received, it wouldn’t reach your heart, so I think that’s why he gave you an reason to hold a grudge so that you had a will to go on. He must have thought that if you bore a grudge, you would have the power to live again.”

“.....That’s.....” Unbelievable — was the first thing that came into Kyosuke’s head.

“Why.....why did he do that for me.....?”

Kyosuke didn't know Kanou. He could only wonder why Kanou had taken it upon himself to become the bad guy for a complete stranger.

“He was always the type of guy who felt like other people's pain was his own pain, but.....” Sahashi stopped talking here. He was hesitating to say anymore, but he was wavering. However, the next moment, he looked like he was sure of himself again and continued speaking. “Perhaps he felt like he had to make amends to your brother”

“.....What?” What do you mean? Kyosuke was about to ask, but Sahashi interrupted and continued to speak.

“Rather than hearing it from me, you should hear it directly from Kanou so that you don't get the wrong idea. I did say that he had to ‘make amends’ to your brother, but I don't mean that he was responsible for your brother's death. Naturally, he wasn't the one who killed your brother. I can assure you on that.”

“Sahashi-san.....”

Sahashi nodded, and with in an extremely sincere look in his eyes said, ‘Please understand,’ so Kyosuke couldn't help but believe that he wasn't lying.

“Kanou was really worried about you, too.....but he must think he shouldn't be near you when you wake up. That's why he didn't come to this hospital room. When he told me that, I didn't quite understand why, but I understand now after talking with you.”

Unlike Kyosuke, who didn't fully understand anything right now, it seemed that Sahashi had concluded everything on his own.

“Wait, I'll call Kanou right away.” He told him, smiling and dashed out of the hospital room.

“Um.....!”

When Kyosuke called after him, he was already out the door. Left alone in the hospital room, Kyosuke began to space out, not knowing what to do with his disorganized thoughts.

Kanou wasn't his brother's enemy –?

He had taken it upon himself to make himself the bad guy just to make him regain the power to live –?

His reason for doing that was because he had to make amends to his brother –?

But he didn't have anything to do with his brother's death.

If that was the case, then why did he have to ‘make amends’? What kind of relationship did Kanou and his brother have?

He wanted to know the truth, but he was a little scared of it. Troubled feelings stirred in his heart, because finding out the ‘truth’ about his brother had been very harsh for him. However, no matter how painful the truth might be, not knowing it was even worse. Deciding that this was for the best, Kyosuke straightened himself up on the bed and waited for Kanou to show up. He continued to stare hard at the hospital door until the it opened.

\* \* \* \*

About five minutes passed until Kanou appeared.

“.....Maybe you should lay down?” Kanou asked him anxiously as Kyosuke slightly sat up on the bed when Kanou walked in.

“I’m alright.”

“I see.” Kanou stood in front of Kyosuke.

“Um.....please sit down.”

Surely they’ll be talking for a long time, Kyosuke thought, so he offered Kanou to sit down in the folding chair that Sahashi had been sitting on just a few minutes ago.

“Sure,” Kanou nodded and sat down.

“Um.....Can I see your police identification book?”

He didn’t know how to start the conversation. Kyosuke already believed and acknowledged that Kanou was a detective like Sahashi had told him, but he couldn’t think of another way to start the conversation, so he broke the ice by saying that.

“.....” Kanou silently reached into his inner pocket, took out his police identification book, opened it, and handed it to Kyosuke.

“.....You’re an inspector.....”

Sure enough, the person in the photograph was Kanou and that was the job title bolded above his name. If he remembered correctly, Sahashi was a superintendent. Kyosuke didn’t quite know the details about the ranks, but he somehow understood that Sahashi was higher in position than Kanou. Kyosuke now understood that perhaps that’s why Sahashi had told Kanou ‘I entrust the rest to you’. Just then, the police identification notebook vanished before Kyosuke’s eyes.

“.....Ah.....”

“Are you done?” Kanou asked as he slowly pulled the notebook away from Kyosuke’s hands.

“Ye- yes. Thank you.”

After Kyosuke thanked him, he looked at Kanou’s face again and Kanou returned his gaze.

“You were a ‘spy’ then?”

“Yeah.”

He still didn’t know what he should ask first. After Kanou unhesitatingly admitted this, he didn’t say anymore. Silence passed over them.

“Sahashi-san said you didn’t kill my brother.”

“.....”

He thought that Kanou was going to unhesitatingly say ‘yeah’ again, but Kanou kept silent.

“Why did you tell me that you killed my brother? Sahashi-san said that you told me this because you wanted to make me regain the power to live, but was that really the reason?”

Each time he spoke, it seemed to Kyosuke that Kanou’s face grew paler and paler. When he thought what the reason might be for that, he came up with two possibilities: One possibility was that Sahashi had been mistaken about Kanou. The other possibility was that he wasn’t mistaken, but he hadn’t told him the whole truth. The truth he omitted was perhaps something that he didn’t think was okay for Kyosuke to hear. But that could only be one thing – Kyosuke decided that he would throw what he thought this truth was at Kanou right now.

“It is true that my brother was the Okawa leader’s lover?”

“.....!”

Kanou’s shoulders shook, and Kyosuke realized that he had caught his breath.

“I didn’t even know that my brother had dropped out of university. My brother worked at various jobs to not make me worry. But in the end, he became a yakuza’s lover. Because I wanted to become a doctor, he tried to find work that paid as much as possible.....If I hadn’t said that I wanted to become a doctor, my brother wouldn’t have become a yakuza’s lover.....right?”

“You’re wrong.”

This was the first time Kanou spoke since Kyosuke had begun talking. However, Kyosuke realized that he had said that just to make him feel better.

“You’re lying.” He answered back.

“I’m not lying. It was for the money, but if he hadn’t become his lover, he would

have suffered even more. His second option was losing his life. Not everything is your fault.”

Because Kanou told him this so simply and because his tone of voice was so indifferent, it made Kyosuke feel like what he said was believable.

“One night the leader just happened to stop by the bar where your brother was working at and fell in love with him at first sight. When he told him he’d pay him one million per month if he became his lover, your brother didn’t have the option to refuse. He had no choice but to accept. The Okawa are good with money, so as promised, they transferred one million into his account each month. It must have been a humiliating time for Syoichi-kun, but I think it gave him motivation to continue this when he thought that with that money he could make his little brother – you – a doctor.”

“.....And yet.....”

If his brother had confided in someone, he might have avoided becoming the yakuza’s lover and the two of them could have left Tokyo together. The fact that he had let his brother go through such pain alone, stirred up even more feelings of guilt inside of him. It made him depressed.

“Once the Okawa have their eyes on you, there’s no way to escape. Your brother was miserable because of that. I wish I could’ve arrested the Okawa sooner for your brother’s sake, but.....” Kanou said that much and then deeply lowered his head to Kyosuke. “I’m truly sorry for failing you. I know that even if I apologize, you won’t forgive me, but.....” Here, Kanou got up from the chair, got down on the floor, put his head to the floor and apologized to the dumbfounded Kyosuke. He was in a prostrate position.

“I’m truly sorry.....!”

“P- please wait! I- I mean, please stand up!” Kyosuke was astonished at this sudden change in Kanou. He leaned forward and grabbed Kanou’s shoulder. Kanou raised his head and looked up at Kyosuke.

“Sahashi-san said that you had nothing to do with my brother’s death. It’s true, isn’t it? If it’s true, then why are you apologizing to me like this? The police are the ones who couldn’t arrest the Okawa. It’s not just your responsibility, right? The Okawa ordered a member from the organization to kill my brother, so you’re not the one who should be apologizing.....right?”

“.....The reason is.....”

Kanou continued to sit on his knees on the floor as he muttered that, looking away

from Kyosuke.

“What’s the reason?”

Kyosuke got off the bed and sank down on the floor so that he could make eye-contact with Kanou.

“Go lay down.” Kanou quickly grabbed Kyosuke by his shoulders and tried to make him stand up.

“Only if you stand up.”

Realizing that Kyosuke was being stubborn, Kanou gave a small sigh as if to say, it can’t be helped, and stood up.

“Wah!”

At the same time, he pulled Kyosuke’s arm to make him stand up and lifted him up to his side, then softly lowered him on the bed.

“.....”

Kyosuke was very flustered because Kanou was always so smooth in his actions and he, Kyosuke, was so clumsy. However, he didn’t have time to deal with that right now. He grabbed Kanou’s arm and pulled him closer when he tried to leave the bed.

“Please sit down.”

He suggested the bed where Kanou had just put him down on. When Kyosuke sat on the bed on his knees, Kanou also sat down after hesitating a little. Kyosuke then peered into Kanou’s eyes and asked,

“Please tell me why you put your head to the floor? You had nothing to do with my brother’s death, right? Or did you? Maybe you knew it was going to happen, but you couldn’t stop it?”

“No, I didn’t know. If I had known that the leader had issued that order, I would’ve thought of a way to somehow avoid that from happening.”

“Then why? What were you apologizing for to me?”

Kyosuke kept pestering him with that question and unable to look directly into his eyes, Kanou cast his eyes down.

“Kanou-san!” Kyosuke clung to Kanou’s arm and continued to peer at his face.

“.....Your brother was the only person within the organization who knew that I was a spy – a spy from the police.”

“What?!”

Kyosuke exclaimed with surprise at what Kanou had said in a stifled voice.

“It was due to my carelessness that he had come to know this. But even when he

realized who I was, he didn't tell anyone. And that wasn't all, he also worked with me to arrest the leader. He investigated more information about the large-scale exchange of methamphetamine that was secretly going on with the Hong Kong mafia and passed that information on to me. The only one involved in that exchange was the Okawa leader. Me, as second in command, and Iwatsuki, my assistant, both didn't know exactly when he was doing this. Since I had passed that information on to the police, the Okawa leader had to leave the scene since all the details regarding the exchange were quickly becoming exposed. But because he left, not a single piece of information about the exchange was revealed. Even if we stepped into the Okawa leader's territory when he wasn't there and tried to arrest all the members of the organization who were there, they would have insisted that they knew nothing about what their leader was doing. The members of the organization always make sure that their responses all match up with each other's. They also use and pressure politicians to back them up just in case they are arrested and interrogated, so in the end it would all be over and we would've been unable to arrest the leader. That kind of thing happens all the time. Because of that, we had no choice but to make it be a flagrante delicto. Your brother understood this, so he tried to pass as much information on to me, but in the end, he investigated a little too much....." With that, Kanou, who had been talking non-stop up until now, broke off and looked crestfallen.

".....So the leader found out what my brother was doing and....killed him...?"

That was probably it. With what had been said, Kyosuke now understood. Kanou did not reply, but because he didn't deny it, Kyosuke realized that he had understood correctly.

".....Could it be.....?"

The memories of that day his brother died flashed before his eyes.

*"Sorry, did I wake you?"*

His brother had smelled strongly of alcohol, so he had thought that he was staggering because he was drunk, but perhaps it was because he had just been tortured by the kumichou. Surely his brother had not confessed to anything. Perhaps he had found an opening and escaped but a person from the organization had chased his brother and thrown a bomb into their room in order to silence his brother. Maybe the kumichou had let his brother escape, thinking that there would be some kind of trouble if they killed him within the organization. There was also a chance that the kumichou had set up the blast so it would be a shocking murder to serve as a warning for the policeman that Kyosuke's

older brother was passing information to.

“.....Was my...was my brother protecting you.....?” Is that why he died? Kyosuke asked, as tears began to fall down from his eyes.

“.....I’m so sorry.....” Kanou deeply lowered his head, apologizing to Kyosuke.

“.....No.....don’t be.....” Crying, Kyosuke clung on to Kanou who continued to keep his head lowered.

“.....Kyosuke-kun.....?”

He heard Kanou ask questioningly.

“.....Big brother was.....big brother was.....”

Now, Kyosuke clearly remembered the conversation he had with his brother that day. A few days before his brother’s death, he was worried about his brother’s condition, because he came back home late every night, so he had told him, *“You don’t need to work so hard, you know?”*

At that time, his brother had smiled at Kyosuke and said, *“Thanks for worrying about me”* and then muttered this, *“I was never proud of anything I’ve ever did until now. But now, you see, I have something to be proud of. I’m important to society...”*

*“What do you mean by that? Does this have something to do with your work?”*

Kyosuke had asked his brother that, not understanding what he had meant, but then it seemed that his brother had come back to his senses, because he smiled and said, *“No, never mind.”*

His brother had been deceiving him, but when he had accidentally let that slip in his drunken state, he had said the truth from the bottom of his heart. Now, for the first time, Kyosuke pondered the importance of what his brother had said at that time.

“Kyosuke-kun.....?”

Clinging on to the confused Kanou, Kyosuke tried to convey his big brother’s thoughts, desperately suppressing his sobs as he began to speak.

“Big brother was.....I think – I think big brother was happy.....! Be- because he.....he could work with you....with the police...! He – he said that for the first time....for the first time he could contribute to society in a meaningful way! .....H- he said that he could now live....with something to be proud of.....! So –!” He couldn’t finish the rest.

“Ughh,” Kyosuke sobbed, and Kanou carefully put his arms around him.

“Big brother, big brother, big brother...!”

His face buried in Kanou’s chest, Kyosuke sobbed as his big brother’s kind smile

flashed into his mind.

“Kyosuke-kun.....”

He heard Kanou’s voice hoarse with tears in his ear as Kanou tightly embraced him.

“Uguu.....! .....Uguu.....!”

Kanou’s chest was warm. He pressed himself into his broad, warm chest that took in all of his nostalgia, all of his gratitude, and all of his sadness. Kyosuke cried until he could cry no more.

## 「Chapter 8」

When his tears finally stopped, Kyosuke started to feel embarrassed for having wailed like a child, so he nervously removed his arms from around Kanou's back and drew away from him.

“.....I'm sorry for getting so upset.....”

“No, it's fine,” Kanou replied in his usual calm voice, and when Kyosuke looked up his eyes locked right with Kanou's.

“.....!” Kyosuke's heart skipped a beat.

Kanou was looking down at Kyosuke with a gentle look in his eyes that Kyosuke had never seen before until now.

“Thank you for telling me the truth behind my brother's death.”

Feeling flustered, Kyosuke averted his eyes, because he didn't know what else to do. No, rather, he was hoping to convey his feelings of gratitude to Kanou by lowering his head like this.

“It doesn't feel right to accept your gratitude because in the end I wasn't able to save him.” The smile on Kanou's face was replaced with a look of regret.

“No.....” It couldn't be helped, he was going to say, but he felt sorry for his brother so he was unable to deny that. However, Kyosuke now truly believed that neither Kanou nor anyone would have been able to stop the even from happening. And yet, Kanou still looked like he had deep feelings of guilt.

*Could it be...?* Kyosuke was struck with an idea and decided he would hit Kanou with it.

“I'm sorry if I'm wrong about this, but when I transferred hospitals, were you the one who paid the expenses for it, Kanou-san?”

Sahashi had told him that that money had come from the life insurance that his older brother had applied for, but Kyosuke couldn't help but feel like something wasn't right about that when he had heard it at that time. For starters, he had never seen any mail or received any telephone calls from the said insurance company, and he doubted his older brother, being still a young man, would really be thinking about what would happen if he were to die. In the end, it turned out that Kyosuke's hunch had proven to be right.

“.....That's the least I could do....”

Hearing him softly say those words, Kyosuke once again lowered his head.

“I'm truly thankful for that. Perhaps you had also arranged for me to go to the

high school in Kansai, Kanou-san?"

"....."

Seeing Kanou silent, Kyosuke figured that he was right about that as well, but rather than feeling thankful for that, he felt more guilty.

"I'm sorry.....I'm really-I'm really sorry for everything that happened until now."

"Don't apologize. It's something I did on my own, but I don't think I can possibly make amends just by having done that."

"You don't need to make amends," Kyosuke told him firmly, and then decided he would find out for sure if the 'ultimate gratitude' he had towards Kanou was justified.

"Um, when I tried to join the organization, you immediately realized it and tried to stop me.....right?"

"....."

Seeing Kanou fall silent again made Kyosuke believe that he was not mistaken about this.

"How did you find out?"

"I heard from the informant, Yukiko. He said that Kouta brought an underling with him. At the same time, I received information from Sahashi that you had vanished from the hospital, so I thought perhaps the underling was you."

"So that was it....."

Kyosuke now understood but remembered one more thing he wanted to ask.

"Um....."

However he hesitated asking this, because he wasn't sure if he wanted to make certain of it, so he stopped talking.

"....."

It seemed that Kanou understood what it was that Kyosuke wanted to ask. Perhaps this was something hard for him to answer, so he also fell silent as well. The hospital room was quiet for a short time, but Kyosuke knew that the conversation had to continue so he braced himself and said: "Um, you were protecting me when you said you were going to make me your 'woman', right?"

".....Yeah," Kanou gave him a curt reply, looking slightly hesitant, but then lowered his head. ".....I'm sorry for doing something so horrible."

"No, don't apologize for that either....."

He had wanted to hear him apologize for that. However, Kyosuke quickly shook his head, thinking that Kanou had already apologized to him plenty.

“You just wanted to let the people in the organization know that I was your ‘woman’, right? Besides...at that time, I was hopeless. I didn’t even care if I died, so you were trying to get me to hold another grudge against you by doing that to me, right?” As Kyosuke asked this he thought that Kanou for sure would say, ‘That’s exactly right’, but when he imagined Kanou saying that to him, he realized that it would bring him shock and it astounded him. Why would he be shocked to hear Kanou say that? He didn’t know. However, in his heart he honestly couldn’t suppress how much it would depress him to hear that. What was he getting so depressed for? It scared Kyosuke to search his subconsciousness for the answer to that question, so he tried to stop thinking about it.

“.....That was because.....” Kanou began, but Kyosuke inadvertently interrupted him.

“It’s okay. I’m sorry. I understand now. I guess I was just surprised, that’s all. I.. um....well....had never done something like that before so.....” As Kyosuke talked, he felt he was beginning to not make any sense, so he closed his mouth for a moment. Silence passed between them again. “Umm....so....”

He was extremely embarrassed. As Kyosuke looked down, blushing, he heard Kanou’s slightly husky voice.

“So it was your first time? ...You’ve.....never been with a woman before either?”

“Huh?” The surprise in Kanou’s voice caught him off guard and Kyosuke inadvertently raised his head. But when he looked up, he made eye contact with Kanou so he quickly looked down again. He felt his heart beat faster when those black eyes had gazed at him.

“I’m sorry. If I had known it would be your first time, I wouldn’t have said that I was going to make you my ‘woman’. I would have went a different route.....” Kanou seemed flustered. Kyosuke had never seen him like that until now, so out of curiosity he couldn’t help but raise his head again to sneak a peek at his face.

“.....I’m sorry. Go report it if you need to.”

“Report it? To who?” He asked, not understanding, and Kanou replied softly, looking troubled.

“To the police.....Say you had a dirty thing happen to you.”

“I’m not going to report it. ‘Cause there was a reason for it,” Kyosuke answered, and Kanou finally looked him in the eye.

“A reason?.....Yeah.”

“.....There was, right?” Kyosuke unconsciously asked because Kanou was

looking like he wanted to say something he couldn't clearly put into words.

“.....” Kanou looked more and more troubled and yet remained silent.

“.....Um.....” Kyosuke was not expecting Kanou to be silent like this, so he accidentally asked Kanou another question. “You did that because I lost the will to live again.....right? And you wanted to convince that thug named Akira, right?”

He thought that this explanation to that incident wasn't wrong, but for some reason it made him sad. However, Kanou slowly shook his head, no.

“.....What?!”

He didn't get it. That's why Kyosuke suddenly exclaimed, and Kanou began to speak with a complicated expression on his face.

“Of course it had been my intention to do what you've just said.....but I can't say that that was the only reason.”

“.....What.....?” He didn't get it, but strangely he began to feel hopeful. “What do you mean by that?” His voice shook when he asked. What was he hoping for? Kyosuke couldn't explain what it was that he was hoping for, but nevertheless, it had taken a lot of courage to ask that.

“I mean.....” Kanou tried to answer but hesitated and kept quiet.

“Please tell me.”

He wanted to hear the truth come out of Kanou's own mouth. But did he really want to hear the 'truth' or something completely different? He was unable to answer that, but urged Kanou for an answer anyway.

“I mean.....” Kanou spoke again. For a moment, he looked like he was hesitating, but then right the next moment it seemed that he had made up his mind and began speaking in a clear voice. “The reason I did that was have you regain your dignity, and it's no lie that I did want to revive your will to live again. However, that wasn't all.....I think. Yes.....If I were asked whether I had done what I did without any wicked intentions, then I don't trust myself to answer yes to that.”

“.....Kanou-san.....”

At that moment, a warm feeling filled Kyosuke's chest.

Happiness – surely that was the feeling. But why did he feel so happy? Unable to find the answer for that, Kyosuke gazed into Kanou's eyes and Kanou gazed back.

“I robbed you of your brother's life.....To atone for that, I've always watched over you and yet, before I knew it, I.....” Kanou said that much before he seemed to come to his senses. He closed his mouth as if to say, 'Never mind,' and shook his head.

“Before you knew it.....*what?*”

He was practically begging here. He wanted wanted Kanou to tell him the rest so badly. He wanted to hear it from the very person himself. That was his only wish right now and that’s why Kyosuke was so insistent as he clinged to Kanou when he asked him.

“Kyosuke-kun.....”

For a moment, Kanou drew back from Kyosuke, because he was being so unexpectedly assertive.

“.....Ah.....”

Realizing that, blood rushed to Kyosuke’s cheeks out of anxiety. Kyosuke understood that he was acting too greedy as he looked down with flushed cheeks. But at that moment, Kanou reached out and took Kyosuke’s face in his hands.

“.....Do you mean you forgive me.....?” Kanou asked cautiously, and after hesitating a little, Kyosuke gave him a deep nod.

“.....”

Kanou looked like he wanted to say something but didn’t.

*“You weren’t disgusted with me?”*

Kyosuke understood that to be was what he was trying to ask, but Kyosuke himself couldn’t answer it so he also kept quiet. The silence that passed between them wasn’t uncomfortable like it had been up until now. What were the words to describe it? It was like a sweet stillness.

“I tried to get you to hold a grudge in order to keep you alive,” Kanou said quietly, breaking that silence.

“.....Yes.....”

Because of that he was alive like this now. Kyosuke nodded as Kanou peered into his eyes and said, “Don’t you hate me?”

“I did hate you.....but.....”

After he had found out the truth, he could only felt grateful for what Kanou had done for him. Kyosuke was about to put that into words, but Kanou interrupted him: “I couldn’t protect your brother.”

“.....”

Kyosuke wished he could have protected his brother, however, that didn’t come true. But he didn’t intend to hold Kanou responsible for what had happened. With that, he shook his head, no, and Kanou continued to speak.

“I’ve also said only terrible things to you. And not just things I’ve said – my

actions were also terrible.”

“All of what you did was because you were thinking of me, right?” Kyosuke asked, and this time, Kanou shook his head, no.

“That’s a good reason, but actually.....”

“I’m happy. If there’s a chance your feelings for me are more than that.....”

“.....What.....?”

Hearing Kyosuke say that with all the courage he could muster left Kanou looking speechless.

“You see.....I’m...*serious*...about you.....”

He wasn’t just being polite. Kyosuke wanted Kanou to know that as he gazed straight at him.

“.....Is it alright for me to feel conceited?” Kanou asked with a somewhat dazed look on his face.

“Please do,” Kyosuke said, pressing himself to Kanou’s chest.

\*       \*       \*       \*

They were on top of the bed when they understood that their feelings for one another were mutual. After silently gazing at each other, Kanou suddenly got up and headed towards the door of the hospital room. The suggestive sound of the door locking could be heard throughout the room. When Kanou turned around, he had an extremely bashful look on his face.

“.....Are you alright?” Kanou asked about his condition and Kyosuke gave him a deep nod before spreading his arms out in an inviting manner.

“.....”

Kanou was about to say something but changed his mind. Instead, he walked over to Kyosuke, sat down on the bed and tightly embraced him.

“.....”

As Kyosuke returned Kanou’s embrace, he inadvertently let out a sigh. He felt that embracing like this increased his desire. He wanted to touch him and he wanted to be touched. Those feelings were growing stronger now, but Kyosuke, who’s never had any experience, didn’t know how to play it out. Although Kanou was tightly embracing him back, he didn’t proceed to the next step.

Impatience – never before had Kyosuke felt that kind of feeling sprout within

him. Unable to control his urges, Kyosuke tightly embraced Kanou back. Kanou felt responsible for his brother's death and had always been watching over him. He had taken it upon himself to make himself the enemy so that he could give Kyosuke the will power to live. Kyosuke was sorry that Kanou had decided to do that, so he didn't feel like making him bear the responsibility for his brother's lost life. It was never Kanou's responsibility to begin with. He wanted to let Kanou know that, but even if he did let him know that, he was sure it wouldn't erase Kanou's guilt. Then what should he do now?

After thinking long and hard, he came up with an idea. Kyosuke gathered up his courage and decided he was going to put his wish into words. He was embarrassed and didn't know how to begin but at this rate they were never going to do it. Provoked by impatience, Kyosuke gathered up his courage and said,

“Um.....”

Since his throat was dry due to nervousness, it was difficult for him to talk. He cleared his throat and was about to talk again when at that moment, Kanou said into his ear: “.....Can I hold you?”

“Yes!”

Hearing those words he had wished to hear, Kyosuke exclaimed enthusiastically despite himself.

“.....!”

When he slightly parted and looked down at him, Kanou looked a little surprised at how quickly and loudly Kyosuke had answered.

“S- sorry.”

Kyosuke felt the blood rise to his head. He was embarrassed because it looked like he was tired of waiting. However, it was true that he replied so enthusiastically exactly because he was tired of waiting. Nothing I can do about it now, Kyosuke thought, preparing himself for the worst while looking directly at Kanou.

“I just really want you to hold me.”

“.....” Suddenly, Kanou smiled and held Kyosuke's cheek in his left hand. “You're so cute.”

“.....I'm not.....” cute, he was going to say, but Kanou pressed his lips to his own before he could finish.

A kiss! – Kyosuke's heart leaped and he inadvertently shut his eyes. This was his first kiss. He had seen people kiss in dramas and movies, but he didn't know how it was like. He felt a wet sensation on his closed lips while his heart raced so much he felt like it

was going to explode.

“.....”

Soft – was his first impression and then...warm.

Were Kanou’s lips really touching his? It wasn’t like he doubted that, he just hadn’t expected another man’s lips to be this soft. Kyosuke opened his eyes and saw Kanou’s face up so close that it was out of focus.

“.....!”

Perhaps sensing that, Kanou also opened his eyes a bit and looked down at Kyosuke.

Dazed, Kyosuke saw those eyes narrow in a smile, and his heart beat faster and faster until he felt it was becoming difficult to breathe. At that moment, Kanou’s lips slowly left his.

“.....Ah.....”

The warm sensation was gone, and as he was beginning to feel a bit sad about it, Kyosuke heard Kanou whisper in a slightly husky voice.

“Can you open your mouth a little?”

“.....What.....?” He asked, not sure of the reason for that. Kyosuke’s lips naturally parted when he spoke, but Kanou smiled and pressed his lips to his again.

“.....Nghhh.....!”

Kanou’s tongue entered through Kyosuke’s faintly parted lips and traced along the row of his teeth. A chill ran up Kyosuke’s spine and he couldn’t help squirming in Kanou’s arms. Kanou put a bit more pressure into the hand that touched Kyosuke’s cheek and tried to make Kyosuke open his mouth some more. For some reason, Kyosuke was feeling very weak but he opened his mouth with Kanou’s help. Kanou’s rough tongue licked the inside of Kyosuke’s mouth. A chill went up his spine and in turn, a strange feeling as well. He felt his body becoming hot. Finally, Kanou’s tongue caught hold of Kyosuke’s tongue and he began to suck on it.

“.....!”

The moment he felt his cock pulsate, it seemed that he could feel blood flowing into the lower half of his body.

“.....Ya.....!”

It was embarrassing to have Kanou find out that he was hard, that’s why Kyosuke tried to pull himself away from him, but Kanou pulled him closer and entwined his tongue with his again. With that, Kanou slowly pressed his body weight on Kyosuke.

Naturally, Kyosuke slid down until his back touched the bed and it suddenly revived memories of that time Kanou had forced him to come. At that time, he had felt only humiliation, but now even though the same thing was happening to him, he definitely could feel only happiness. Kyosuke's chest swelled with excitement and Kanou continued to kiss him as his hand crept over Kyosuke's body, removing the hospital pajamas. When Kanou's hand reached down to Kyosuke's underwear, Kyosuke stopped that hand by reflex.

".....You don't want to?" Kanou withdrew his lips and asked. He trembled when Kanou's breath touched his lips.

"That's.....not it....." He was aware that the front of his boxers was bulging and that his cock was getting hot. At that moment, Kyosuke also saw that the front of his underwear had a wet spot, so he covered it with his hands out of embarrassment.

"There's nothing to be embarrassed about," Kanou smiled, removed Kyosuke's hands, pulled down his underwear.

"No.....!"

This time, he covered his face with his hands, because he was embarrassed by his erection. He heard Kanou laugh in a way that sounded loving and not contemptuous. He wanted to see the kind of expression Kanou had on his face, because perhaps it was a smile, so Kyosuke peeked up at Kanou through his fingers.

"You're so cute," honestly, Kanou told him, gazing back at Kyosuke.

"No.....I'm....." not, Kyosuke was about to say, but Kanou grabbed his cock, and Kyosuke couldn't help but let out a cry instead. He felt like he was about to come just by having Kanou touch him. Of course that made Kyosuke feel embarrassed, so he tried with all his might to suppress his ejaculation.

"You don't need to hold it back," he heard Kanou laugh again and then he rubbed the tip of Kyosuke's cock between his thumb and index finger.

"Ya.....!" He squirmed, trying to avoid Kanou's hand but not because it felt disgusting.

"What's wrong?" Kanou asked and Kyosuke told him his wish despite how self-conscious he felt.

"Somehow...it feels wrong if I'm the only one feeling good."

".....!" Kanou widened his eyes.

Was he appalled with him? Kyosuke wondered, his shame increasing. They had gotten this far, so he might as well tell it to him straight. Kyosuke braced himself and

said: "I want to make you feel good too.....I want to touch yours too."

".....Kyosuke-kun," Kanou said his name, looking surprised. Perhaps he was so surprised because Kyosuke had said something that was extremely embarrassing. Kyosuke wished he hadn't said that.

"U- um...Kanou-san....." What should he do if he had offended him? Anxiety quickly swept over him as he tried to call out to Kanou, but Kanou gave an embarrassed smile and nodded.

"Will you touch me, then?"

".....Yes.....!"

He could tell that Kanou was happy even though he looked embarrassed and with that Kyosuke's anxiety vanished in a heartbeat. When Kyosuke gave him a nod, Kanou sat up slightly and lowered the zipper on his slacks, looking more and more embarrassed. Then he stuck his hand inside and pulled out his cock.

"Wahh....." Seeing Kanou's sturdy cock again, Kyosuke couldn't help but gasp in admiration. Along with the lustrous black hair, this thing had made Kyosuke feel pain and intolerable humiliation just some time ago, however, now this thing in front of Kyosuke did not appear so threatening. It looked lovely to him.

This was inside of me? Kyosuke thought, spacing out for a moment, but then immediately came back to his senses and nervously returned his gaze to Kanou's face.

"Can I....touch it?" He asked.

".....Don't press hard," Kanou smirked, telling Kyosuke something he didn't understand.

"What?"

When he asked him what he had meant by that, Kanou told him 'never mind', shaking his head.

"Touch me."

".....Ye- yes....."

Trying to suppress his cry of amazement, Kyosuke slowly reached out and wrapped his hands around Kanou's cock.

".....It's hot....."

Kanou's cock pulsed in his hands. He was surprised by how long and thick it was, but even more so, he was surprised by the heat and texture of it that he inadvertently stared at Kanou's cock with deep interest.

"You're embarrassing me, looking at me like that," Kanou said truly sounding

embarrassed and Kyosuke came back to his senses again.

“I’m sorry.”

“No need to apologize. Let’s come together,” Kanou said, smiling, and then suddenly began stroking Kyosuke’s cock.

“.....Me too.....”

He couldn’t just sit here and not do anything, Kyosuke thought as he too began stroking Kanou’s cock.

“Ah.....! .....Ah! .....Yaa.....!”

The more Kanou stroked him, the more Kyosuke began to lose focus in his own hand. This won’t do, Kyosuke thought, but induced by his feelings of desire, his thoughts began to fail him.

“Ah! .....Aahh.....! .....Ah! Ah! AHHH!”

Just thinking about the fact that Kanou was stroking his cock made him overwhelmed.

I want Kanou to feel the same, Kyosuke thought and began to blindly stroke Kanou’s cock.

“I’m gonna cum.....! I’m gonna cum.....! I’m cominggg.....!”

He had no idea what he was saying anymore though he did realize that he was sounding extremely coquettish and lewd.

“I’m cominggg.....!”

He couldn’t take this anymore. At the same time Kyosuke screamed, he couldn’t help shooting out milky white fluid into Kanou’s hand.

“.....!”

Kanou also caught his breath, but he still hadn’t come. His cock pulsed in Kyosuke’s hand, marking its presence. Breathing wildly, Kyosuke grasped Kanou’s cock and gazed into his eyes.

“Kyosuke-kun.....?” Kanou asked, wondering what was wrong.

“.....Umm.....”

There was only one wish growing in Kyosuke’s heart right now – he wanted Kanou to hold him one more time. He wanted to be one with him. However, Kyosuke himself was confused as to why he had such a desire since he still clearly remembered the pain he had felt when he had been forcefully penetrated. He wanted Kanou to write over that memory. But even more than that, he wanted them to have consensual sex and that wish burst out of his heart.

“.....I want.....you to hold me.”

If he didn't say it, Kanou would not act. Kyosuke didn't think that he would initiate anything on his own, because he himself had told Kyosuke it was okay to report that incident to the police. Because of that, Kyosuke put his embarrassment aside, gathered up all of his courage and told him that, but as he had imagined, Kanou looked troubled and slowly averted his eyes away from Kyosuke.

“But I.....”

“I know, but I want to.....I really want to be.....” One with you, he was going to say, but obviously he was too embarrassed to finish that sentence.

Still averting his eyes, Kanou asked softly, “I've put you through so much....What should I say to make it up to you.....?”

“You don't need to say anything, so.....” Kyosuke squeezed Kanou's cock slightly. His cock pulsed and a bit of pre-cum spilled out.

“.....It's fine.....the way it is now,” Kyosuke also kept his eyes down when he said that because he was embarrassed, but right at that moment, he felt Kanou's cock in his hand grow in size.

“.....What.....?” Bewildered, Kyosuke raised his head and met Kanou's eyes.

“.....I can hold you?” Kanou asked.

“Yesm” Kyosuke replied at once with a nod. Kanou smiled at him before removing Kyosuke's hands from his cock and slowly lifting up Kyosuke's legs.

“.....I'm so embarrassed.....” Kyosuke muttered without thinking when his hips were in the air and his legs spread open.

“You're so cute,” after Kanou said that, making Kyosuke blush even more, he removed one of his hands from Kyosuke's leg, brought it to his mouth and licked his finger. Kyosuke couldn't help being fascinated by this sexy move, but he was aware of Kanou's finger when it headed towards his backside and felt his body become stiff. He was much stiffer than he perceived himself to be, so he forced out a sigh.

“It's okay,” Kanou said and quietly inserted his finger.

“Urgh.....”

Although Kyosuke's body grew even stiffer from having an object inside of him, as Kanou continued to slowly move his finger in deeper, he started to feel a different kind of feeling.

“.....What.....?”

Kanou's finger located the firm part near the entrance and the moment he touched

it, Kyosuke felt as if his body rose up in the air as pre-cum gushed out of his weak cock. While he puzzled about why that had happened to him, Kanou continued moving his finger, making Kyosuke feel more and more of that 'irresistible' sensation.

"Something.....is strange....."

Gradually, he felt his cock fill with heat. His soft insides began twitching around the finger still inside him. He didn't understand what was happening to him.

When he complained that he felt strange, Kanou again said, "It's okay," and nodded, smiling.

"....."

Relief filled his chest and he relaxed. Even when Kanou added a second finger inside him, he didn't feel any pain. When Kanou had inserted three fingers in, he was surprised, but still didn't feel pain. In fact, he began to feel more and more impatient.

".....It'll be okay soon," Kanou muttered as if talking to himself and slowly took out his fingers.

".....Ya!....."

Kyosuke let out a gasp as he felt his insides twitching as if they were trying to hold on to the fingers that left.

Kanou adjusted his grip on Kyosuke's legs, looked seriously at Kyosuke and said, "Tell me if it hurts. I'll stop at once."

".....Okay....."

After waiting for Kyosuke to nod, Kanou pressed the tip of his cock where his fingers had been before. Kyosuke's insides twitched more and more from the slippery sensation and he felt confused by this. When this had happened to him before, he had felt like throwing up the moment that hot mass had pressed into him, but now he felt different. Why? Perhaps it was because his impressions of this had changed now that he *wanted* to have sex. But he didn't have time to continue being surprised at this as the tip of Kanou's cock penetrated him. The thickness of it was incomparable to that of the fingers, but even though Kyosuke's body grew stiff when Kanou moved his hips in closer, he didn't feel any pain because he had been well prepared.

He could feel the mass of Kanou's cock inside him. Kanou was being as gentle as possible with Kyosuke. Ever so slowly, he moved his hips into him. Finally, as soon as their lower regions touched, Kanou let out a sigh and Kyosuke looked up at him.

".....Does...it hurt?" Kanou asked in an excited voice. Just by thinking that he was giving Kanou pleasure made Kyosuke's chest grow hot.

“I’m okay……” He nodded.

After looking slightly like he was hesitating, Kanou quietly asked, “Can I move?”

“……”

At first Kyosuke didn’t understand what he meant by that, but then he remembered that Kanou had banged his hips against him when they had done it before. Remembering how much pain that had caused him made Kyosuke stiffen up for a moment.

“Should I stop?” Kanou asked, realizing what Kyosuke was thinking and tried to pull out. However, Kyosuke purposefully tightened his legs around Kanou’s back.

“It’s okay.”

Even if he was about to do something that brought about some pain, he wanted to accept it. After Kyosuke said that from the bottom of his heart, Kanou looked down at him for some time and then sighing again said with a kind smile, “Tell me if it hurts. I’ll stop right away.”

“Yes,” he nodded and Kanou smiled, narrowing his eyes, and slowly began to move his hips.

“……Huh……?”

Although he was prepared to feel pain, every time Kanou pulled his cock in and out, his soft insides filled with heat from the friction and impatient feelings increased.

“Ah……! ……Aahh……! ……”

Every time he felt Kanou’s cock inside him, he was seized by an unattainable feeling and cried out naturally. That feeling was a ‘pleasure’ that he had newly found and that ‘pleasure’ wrapped his body up in heat. Kyosuke also realized that he was beginning to grow hard, but the more he realized it, the more bewildered he felt.

“Yaa……! ……Ah!……AH!……Aahh……!” As Kanou picked up speed, Kyosuke’s voice grew higher. He realized that he was beginning to sound like a girl and refused to accept that fact, but his hot body shivered with joy from the pleasure he got doing it with Kanou. “No more……! Ahh……! ……No more……!”

Before he knew it, Kyosuke’s cock had become completely hard and so erect that pre-cum began to drip out while Kanou continued thrusting. It seemed that his already loudly beating heart now sounded like a fire alarm, and sweat broke out all over his body. Kanou probably realized that Kyosuke was having a hard time breathing from gasping so much, but he suddenly smiled, let go of one of Kyosuke’s legs, grabbed Kyosuke’s hard cock and drew it through his hand without stopping the rhythm of his hips.



“AHH!”

Kyosuke came hard, shooting out milky white fluid between their stomachs, with a cry so high that he wondered if that was really him who made such a noise.

“.....!”

After he ejaculated his insides twitched violently. Perhaps because of that, he squeezed Kanou’s cock and Kanou also came inside him. Kanou let out a low sigh and stopped moving. Kyosuke felt the weight of the semen inside him and couldn’t help letting out a deep sigh. Of course it wasn’t out of disgust but out of happiness that they had come together.

“.....Are you alright?” Kanou turned to Kyosuke, worriedly asking him as Kyosuke again let out a happy sigh.

“.....I’m okay.....It just...felt so good.....” Kyosuke gasped out amidst unsettled breaths before Kanou smiled kindly at him and brought his lips closer to his.

“.....I’m happy. I’m happy we came together.”

“Me too.....”

If Kanou truly thought that, there was no greater happiness for Kyosuke than this. As Kyosuke gasped, overwhelmed that they felt the same about each other, Kanou pressed his lips to his while smiling kindly at him.

“I love you.....”

“.....Me too.....!”

He was happy.

He was so happy!

Feelings of happiness spilled out of Kyosuke’s chest, and he tightened his arms around Kanou’s back as much as he could. But all of a sudden, feelings of guilt rose up in Kyosuke’s heart. He felt guilty that Kanou and him were alive like this and feeling joy together. He wondered who was making him feel guilty and realized that it was his brother. His brother had provided Kanou information until it led him to lose his life. Perhaps he had done this because he had loved him? Kyosuke realized this, but it was already too late to suppress his own feelings for Kanou.

“.....I’m sorry.....” Kyosuke couldn’t stop himself from muttering that out, and Kanou widened his eyes in surprise.

“.....Never.....” Mind, Kyosuke was about to say, but tears began to spill out of his eyes before he could finish.

“.....Kyosuke-kun.....”

Startled by this, Kanou tried to call out Kyosuke's name, but Kyosuke tightly wrapped his arms and legs around Kanou's back and buried his face in his shoulder.

I'm sorry, big brother, but I love Kanou-san, too.

Kyosuke's brother was smiling within his innermost thoughts. He realized that perhaps he was just picturing what was convenient for him. Nevertheless, he heard his brother's phantom voice and at the same time, began to firmly believe that this truly was his brother's wish.

*"Live for my part."*

I will live. I will live long. I won't give up the life that both big brother and Kanou gave to me in vain.

Watch over me, big brother.

In his heart, he begged his brother to do this and tightening his arms and legs around Kanou's back, Kyosuke begged Kanou for a wish that he couldn't put into words but could only show through his actions – he wanted Kanou to live together with him.

He couldn't know for sure if this wish of his had reached Kanou without actually asking him, but as Kanou tightly embraced him back, Kyosuke believed that this was a sign of Kanou's own wish, so as he returned Kanou's embrace with an even tighter embrace of his own, in his mind he begged the phantom of his brother to be at peace now too.

## 「Chapter 9」

It appeared that he had fallen asleep. The next time Kyosuke woke up he was still in that same hospital bed.

“We’ve arrested the Okawa leader.”

Even without opening his eyes he knew to whom that all too familiar voice belonged to. It was Sahashi.

“I’m terribly sorry that I was of no help to you even in the end.”

The voice he heard apologizing definitely belonged to Kanou. Not understanding what he was apologizing for, Kyosuke just woke up and was half conscious as he listened to their conversation.

“What’re you talking about? You’ve been providing us with plenty of information this whole time. I’m sure you would’ve arrested the leader before long.”

“It doesn’t matter now. I still didn’t do it,” Kanou laughed, brushing aside Sahashi’s passionate declaration.

“Say,” Sahashi said, sounding worried, and Kanou replied, “What?”

“You didn’t expect that the five years you’ve spent undercover would fall to ruin just like that, did you?”

“That’s right,” Kanou said thoughtfully and didn’t say anything for some time.

The five years fell to ruin? What was he talking about? Kyosuke wondered dreamily as Sahashi’s words replayed in his head.

*“With the information he had gathered, he had devised a plan to capture the Okawa leader.”*

Why had he been using the past tense? He pondered.

Perhaps.... perhaps Kanou had given himself away for his – Kyosuke’s – sake? Maybe Kanou had no choice but to seek help from the police in order to save him after he had had gotten himself foolishly caught? Sahashi had said that if they were to arrest the Okawa leader they would have to do it with a flagrante delicto. The Okawa leader had not been there at the place where he, Kyosuke, had been taken to when he was kidnapped. That’s why the Okawa leader had not been arrested immediately. So that means Kanou had to give himself away for Kyosuke’s sake even though he had been hiding his true identity for five years in order to arrest the Okawa leader! As soon as he realized that, Kyosuke became fully awake and tried to get up, thinking that he must apologize at once.

“But I’d be lying if I said I completely didn’t expect it. You see, when I thought about what was most important to me, I chose it without any hesitations,” Kyosuke heard Kanou’s soft voice.

“So Kyosuke-kun’s life was more important?”

“Of course,” Kanou replied immediately when Sahashi had asked that to make sure. “I wanted to protect Kyosuke-kun. I thought that if giving up my cover could protect him, I could forgive myself for the life that was lost.”

“You feel guilty about that, don’t you? For robbing Kyosuke-kun of his brother’s life.” Hearing Sahashi’s question, Kyosuke held his breathe so that they wouldn’t realize he was awake because he was interested to hear Kanou’s answer too.

“.....Of course I do. However, that’s not all.”

“Say,” with that, Sahashi asked Kanou another question.

“What?”

“Kyosuke-kun’s brother....Miyama Syoichi loved you, didn’t he?”

Hearing Sahashi’s question, Kyosuke inadvertently almost said, ‘I knew it!’ He then remembered when he had noticed his older brother suddenly becoming very cheerful on one occasion. His older brother had come home late so they didn’t talk long, but at that time, he had certainly been in a good mood. Kyosuke had asked his brother if something good had happened and his brother laughed and said it was nothing, but he still had seemed so terribly happy.

*“Even someone like me can be useful to society...When I think that, I can’t help but feel happy.”*

When Kyosuke remembered his big brother looking truly happy, his chest filled with an emotion he couldn’t explain.

“I don’t know.....but,” Kanou replied. “I feel awful when I think that he died because he had feelings for me and did reckless things...” Kanou softly stated that, and Kyosuke was about to say ‘You’re wrong’, but instead, Sahashi said:

“I think that Syoichi-kun was certainly trying to make himself useful to you...but I expect that he was working with you not simply because he had feelings for you. I think it was because he wanted to help erase these social evils, and I think it would be rude to Syoichi-kun if we thought otherwise.”

“.....You’re right. That must have been it,” Kanou replied immediately, and Sahashi smiled at him.

“After many twists and turns, the Okawa leader was finally arrested. I’m really

glad your five years of hard work didn't go in vain."

"Well, actually it was close to going in vain," Kanou answered Sahashi also with a smile.

"Until now, I've never been so grateful for how much experience you have! It must have ruined your social standing to have you go along with my selfishness."

"Ahaha! Yeah, I never thought that I'd be so glad to have the rank of a superintendent! Whether or not to throw away the long, five years of undercover investigation is not a decision you can make so easily," Sahashi laughed.

"Yeah, you're right about that," Kanou smiled at Sahashi.

"It gives me goosebumps just thinking that the criminal who blew up Syoichi-kun's and Kyosuke-kun's apartment was finally arrested. I don't think I should say this, being a police officer and all, but I want to believe that Syoichi-kun's spirit led us to him."

"He testified that he had acted upon the leader's orders."

Laughter vanished from their voices and the atmosphere became solemn.

"Well, since that happened I decided to let your selfishness slide. But make sure you're not *too* grateful to me," Sahashi broke that atmosphere, saying that with a laugh.

Kanou also smiled back at him.

"Don't worry, I won't be."

"That's good then. I'd be uncomfortable if you suddenly cried on me and thanked me profusely."

"Who's gonna cry on you?"

After joking around, Sahashi began to talk to Kanou in a heartfelt way.

"Having a grudge encouraged him to live...However, I was shocked to hear that you told Kyosuke-kun you were the one who killed his brother. Why didn't you tell me you had done this?"

"I'm sorry," Kanou honestly apologized, but Sahashi kept asking.

"When you sacrificed your own money to look after Kyosuke did you do that to try to atone for letting Syoichi-kun die?"

Kyosuke himself wanted to hear the answer to that question too. That's why he continued pretending to be asleep and waited for Kanou's answer. He thought the answer was probably going to be yes, but to actually hear that come out of Kanou's mouth seemed to him would be slightly cruel. As Kyosuke braced himself and waited for Kanou to speak, he heard Kanou say in a sincere tone of voice:

“Of course I was trying to atone for that, but...if that was the only reason, I wouldn't have saved him and risked putting the five years worth of undercover investigation to vain.”

“So you wanted to protect Kyosuke-kun no matter what, huh?” Sahashi laughed and lightly nudged Kanou.

“Yeah.”

Tears fell from Kyosuke's eyes when he heard Kanou agree, sounding so embarrassed. If he started to sob they would realize he was awake. Trying to control himself from crying, Kyosuke heard Sahashi's cheerful voice.

“So what will you do now? It'll be hard for you to let him go to Kansai, won't it?”

“That's right,” Kanou forced a smile and Kyosuke felt that he was gazing down at him.

“I think we'll decide what to do after I talk to him. If he says he wants to become a doctor then I want to help him become a doctor, but if he says he wants to take another route in life, I will support him on that too.”

“You're too sweet.”

“I guess,” Kanou followed after Sahashi's teasing.

But Kyosuke's dream of becoming a doctor was a thing of the past now. He didn't wish to pursue that anymore. Right now, the only wish that filled his heart was to be by Kanou's side. As soon as they were alone together, he would tell him this. Thinking that, Kyosuke listened to the two friends talk as hot tears continued to stream down his cheeks.

## 「Epilogue」

For a long time, I had thought that maybe I should leave a note with my last will. The note would be addressed to Kyosuke, my beloved little brother.

After our parents died, I dropped out of university because of the hardships of life. However, I couldn't let my little brother know this. My little brother was too young to face such a terrible reality. If you persevere, you will get by. I wanted to raise my brother by persevering. I thought that was the only thing I needed, but somehow before I knew it I had strayed down the wrong path. I have regrets. If only I could somehow return to the right track – I thought about that a lot. But no matter how much you regret something, you cannot turn back time – that is another thing I realized with the years.

I continued to live if only for my little brother's sake. He was the only person I had that was worth living for. Never did I imagine that there'd be something else worth living for. But I knew that if I carried out this newfound purpose for my life, I would probably die without seeing my little brother grow up.

That's why I thought I should write a note with my last will. My life was not something to be proud of. Even my little brother, if he were to find out the kinds of things I've done, would probably come to despise me after the initial shock was done. It hurts knowing that the person you love might come to despise you. But I had done what I've done, so I had made up my mind that I should come to terms with it, for I had no other choice, and let my little brother know about it.

But it's not like I thought I would try to make myself useful to society just because I didn't want to be despised for my actions. Well, perhaps I did think that.

I just had one thing to say:

Big brother went down the wrong path, but he wants you to live righteously. Big brother went down the wrong path, but he wants you to know that he continues to regret it.

That's all.

After I wrote my last will, I thought that I would leave it with that person – the person who had taught me for the first time that you can love someone outside your family. If it were him, then he would surely protect my little brother even after I died. If it were him, who had a soul more noble than anyone else and who was kinder than anyone else, then...

I was grateful to God for being able to meet him. I never belonged to a particular religion, but I think this blessing had surely been God's intention.